AUGUST
1924

EVERYBODY'S MAGAZINE

NUMBER
300

Everybody's

FIRST IN FICTION

Miss Rena Decatur
3 Tremont St
Peabody Mass
Oct24

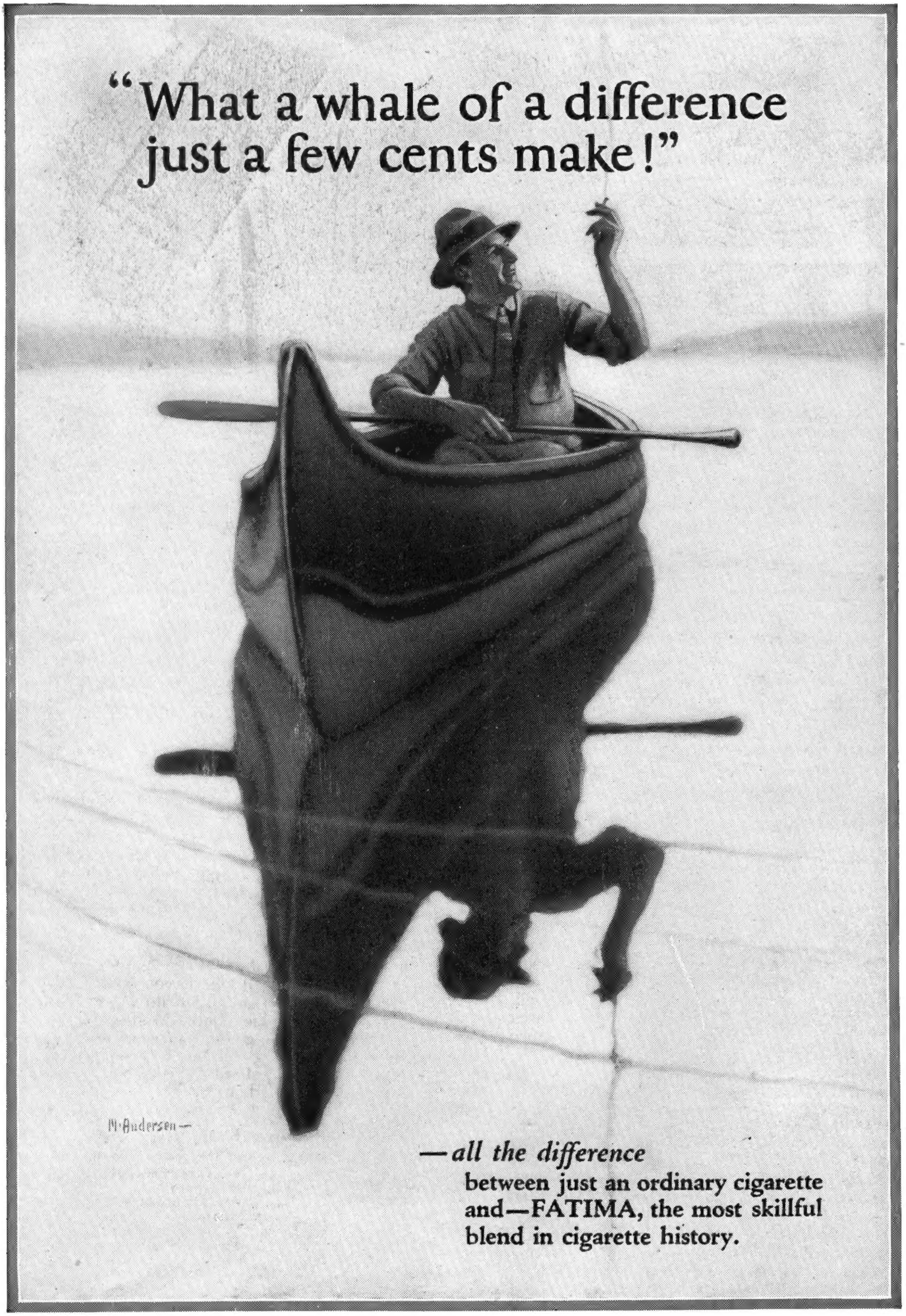
AUGUST 1924

25¢

Special Holiday Number
with
A COMPLETE NOVEL
and

George Kibbe Turner
Honoré Willsie Morrow
H. DeVere Stacpoole
Sam Carson
Elsa Barker
Isabel Ecclestone Mackay
Elizabeth Newport Hepburn
Robert Simpson
Arthur Mills
and Others

Chas A. MacLellan



"What a whale of a difference just a few cents make!"

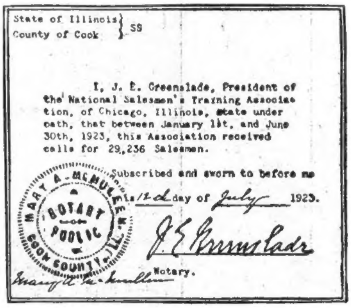
—all the difference
between just an ordinary cigarette and—FATIMA, the most skillful blend in cigarette history.

If You Want Bigger Pay Make This FREE TEST

There's a sure way to increase your earning power. And here is such an opportunity. Look into it—you may recognize it as your one chance to earn the biggest money of your life.

ARE you ready for a shock? Then, let me tell you that if you have average intelligence and can read and write, there is a quick and easy way for you to earn enough money to satisfy any average ambition. And after reading this offer, if you do not quickly make more money, you have no one to blame but yourself.

Don't take my word for it. By a simple test—you can make in the privacy of your home—you will know that every word I say is true—or otherwise. The test does not obligate you or cost you one penny. But make it! Then judge for yourself. It has proved to be THE opportunity for thousands. They have found the way to bigger pay—are now earning from five to twenty times as much as formerly. And the beauty of it is they enjoy every minute in the day's work. They are their own bosses.



State of Illinois }
County of Cook } SS

I, J. E. Greenslade, President of the National Salesmen's Training Association, of Chicago, Illinois, state under oath, that between January 1st, and June 30th, 1923, this Association received calls for 29,236 Salesmen.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 12d day of July 1923.

J. E. Greenslade

Mary A. McMullen
Notary.

The thousands who have made this test before you, and who are now making the money you would like to make, are now salesmen. Ninety-five per cent once thought they were not "cut out for selling," that salesmen were "born" and not made. They found it was a fallacy that had kept them in the rut. They discovered that anyone with proper training can sell, and they are making from $5,000 to $10,000 a year, because they had the vision to recognize opportunity.

Thousands Have Proved It!

For instance, Ellis Sumner Cook, 58 Superior St., Oak Park, Ill., left a $25 a week job and last year made $9,000! H. D. Miller, a Chicago boy, was making $100 a *month* as a stenographer in July, 1922. In September, 3 months later, he was making $100 a *week* as a salesman. W. P. Clenny of Kansas City, Mo., stepped from a $150 a month clerkship into a selling job at $500 a month. He is making $850 a month now. M. V. Stephens of Albany, Ky., was making $25 a week. He took up this training and now makes 5 times that much. J. H. Cash of Atlanta, Ga., exchanged his $75 a month job for one which pays him $500 a month. O. H. Malfroot of Boston, Mass., stepped into a $10,000 position as a SALES MANAGER—so thorough is this training. All these successes are due to this easy, fascinating and rapid way to master certain invincible secrets of selling.

Simple as A B C

Sounds remarkable, doesn't it? Yet there is nothing remarkable about it. There are certain ways to approach different types of prospects to get their undivided attention—certain ways to stimulate keen interest—certain ways to overcome objections, batter down prejudices, outwit competition and make the prospect act. If you will learn these principles there is awaiting you a brilliant success and more money than you ever thought of earning.

As you will see by the affidavit to the left thousands of reputable selling organizations in America turn to this Association for their Salesmen. We can never take care of all the demands made on us for this better type of trained salesmen.

Make This Free Test at Once

Don't turn this page until you have clipped the coupon, filled it out, and sent it on its way. The test is contained in a free book, "Modern Salesmanship," which we will gladly send you without obligation. After reading the book through you will ask yourself the questions it brings up. The answers will prove whether this is your opportunity or not. So mail the coupon NOW.

NATIONAL SALESMEN'S TRAINING ASS'N.
53 W. Jackson Blvd. Dept. 74-K Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Ass'n.
53 W. Jackson Blvd., Dept. 74-K, Chicago, Ill.

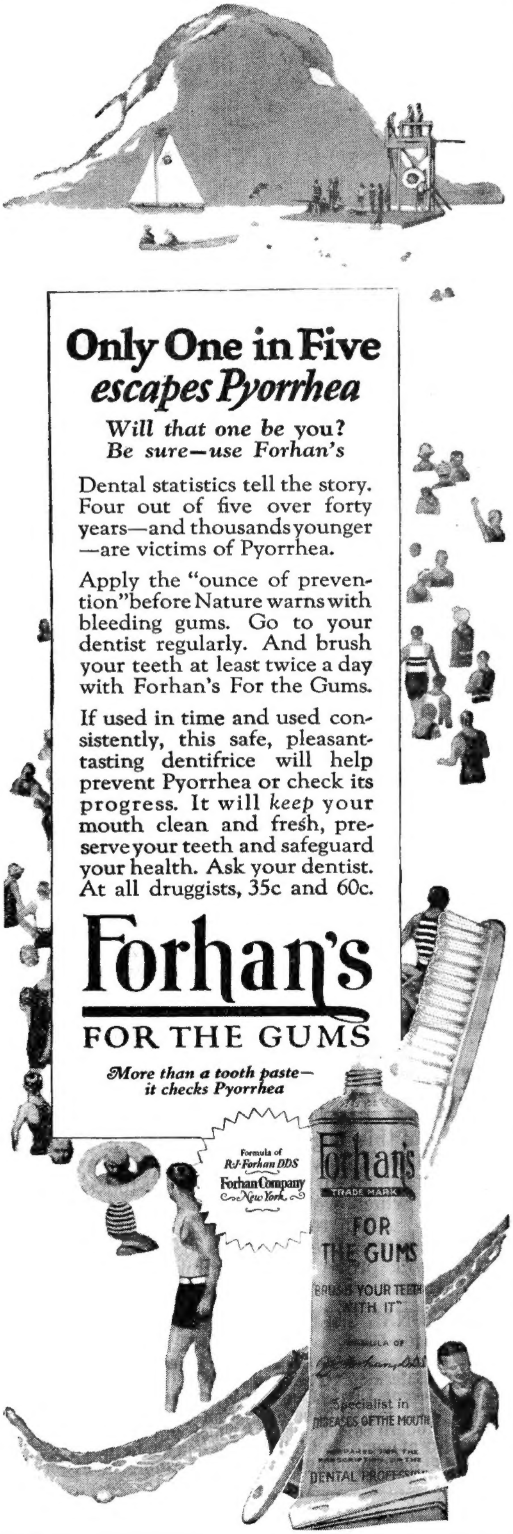
Please send me without obligation on my part your free book, "Modern Salesmanship," which will enable me to test my ability at home, and full information about the N. S. T. A. System of Salesmanship Training and Employment Service.

Name..

Address..

City.. State..

Age............................ Occupation..



Only One in Five escapes Pyorrhea

Will that one be you?
Be sure—use Forhan's

Dental statistics tell the story. Four out of five over forty years—and thousands younger—are victims of Pyorrhea.

Apply the "ounce of prevention" before Nature warns with bleeding gums. Go to your dentist regularly. And brush your teeth at least twice a day with Forhan's For the Gums.

If used in time and used consistently, this safe, pleasant-tasting dentifrice will help prevent Pyorrhea or check its progress. It will *keep* your mouth clean and fresh, preserve your teeth and safeguard your health. Ask your dentist. At all druggists, 35c and 60c.

Forhan's
FOR THE GUMS

More than a tooth paste—it checks Pyorrhea

New England CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC

BOSTON, MASS.

George W. Chadwick
Director

Year Opens
September 18, 1924

Located in the Music Center of America
It affords pupils the environment and atmosphere so necessary to a musical education. Its complete organization, and splendid equipment, offer exceptional facilities for students.
Dormitories for women students.

Complete Curriculum
Courses in every branch of Music, applied and theoretical.

Owing to the Practical Training
In our Normal Department, graduates are much in demand as teachers.

The Free Privileges
Of lectures, concerts and recitals, the opportunities of ensemble practice and appearing before audiences, and the daily associations are invaluable advantages to the music student.

A Complete Orchestra
Offers advanced pupils in piano-forte, voice, organ and violin experience in rehearsal and public appearance with orchestral accompaniment.

Dramatic Department
Practical training in acting.

Address Ralph L. Flanders, General Manager

PANTLIND HOTEL

GRAND RAPIDS
The Furniture Capital of America

750 Rooms

Hotel PANTLIND

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

An entire city block of hospitality

In comfort, service and appointments—and in the excellence of its several restaurants—the Pantlind ranks among the finest hotels in America. Those who best know Grand Rapids, stay at the Pantlind.

Fred Z. Pantlind, President

EVERYBODY'S
August, 1924

Published monthly by The Ridgway Company at Spring and Macdougal Sts., New York, N. Y. Yearly subscription $2.50 in advance; single copy 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter Aug. 16, 1899, at the Post-Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Entered as second-class matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada.

Volume LI
Number 2

One Dollar

—that's all you need pay

TOPKIS is the kind of union suit you have often wished for. But you have never expected to get that kind for One Dollar.

Value stands out in Topkis. Best nainsook and high-grade fabrics. *Enough* material, too. Loose, easy fit. Roomy arm-holes. Extra wide, extra long legs. Full size *guaranteed.*

No good dealer asks more than One Dollar for Topkis. Many say it's *worth* more.

Men's Shirts and Drawers, **75c** a garment. Boys' Union Suits, Girls' Bloomer Union Suits, and Children's Waist Union Suits, 75c. In Canada, Men's Union Suits, $1.50.

Write for free booklet telling what to look for in underwear

Topkis Brothers Company, Wilmington, Delaware
General Sales Offices: 350 Broadway, New York City

It pays to buy Topkis by the box. Six union suits for $6. The more suits in service, the better each one wears.

Ask your dealer for TOPKIS.

Look for the TOPKIS label.

TOPKIS

Athletic Underwear

$100 a Week

"Wouldn't you like to earn that much, too?"

"I know you would, Bob—think what it would mean to us! It worries me to see you wasting the best years of your life when you could make them count for so much.

"Can't you see it, Bob? Don't you see that the reason men get ahead is because they train themselves to do some one thing just a little better than others?

"If the International Correspondence Schools can raise the salaries of other men, they can raise yours. If they can help other men to win advancement and more money, they can help you, too. I am sure of it.

"Don't let another year slip by and leave you right where you are to-day. Let's at least find out how the I. C. S. can help you. Let's mark and mail this coupon right now!"

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2610-B, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Personnel Organization
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Business Law
- ☐ Banking and Banking Law
- ☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
- ☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
- ☐ Bookkeeping
- ☐ Private Secretary
- ☐ Spanish ☐ French
- ☐ Salesmanship
- ☐ Advertising
- ☐ Better Letters
- ☐ Show Card Lettering
- ☐ Stenography and Typing
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Civil Service
- ☐ Railway Mail Clerk
- ☐ Common School Subjects
- ☐ High School Subjects
- ☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

- ☐ Electrical Engineering
- ☐ Electric Lighting
- ☐ Mechanical Engineer
- ☐ Mechanical Draftsman
- ☐ Machine Shop Practice
- ☐ Railroad Positions
- ☐ Gas Engine Operating
- ☐ Civil Engineer
- ☐ Surveying and Mapping
- ☐ Metallurgy
- ☐ Steam Engineering
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Architect
- ☐ Architects' Blue Prints
- ☐ Contractor and Builder
- ☐ Architectural Draftsman
- ☐ Concrete Builder
- ☐ Structural Engineer
- ☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
- ☐ Automobile Work
- ☐ Airplane Engines
- ☐ Navigation
- ☐ Agriculture and Poultry
- ☐ Mathematics

Name..

Street Address.. 3-6-24

City..State..

Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Welcome to New York and the Alamac

71 ST STREET AND BROADWAY

New York's latest hotel achievement with its 600 Rooms, each having bath and shower and Servidor. Three exceptional restaurants.

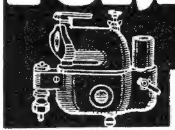
In a cool, uncongested yet most convenient location.

Reduced rates from May to October

LATZ OWNERSHIP—MANAGEMENT

FORDS-34 Miles

on Gallon of Gasoline
with Air Friction Carburetor



We guarantee all other cars nearly double present mileage, power and flexibility, make hills on high formerly difficult on low. Models for any car, truck, tractor, marine or stationary engine. **Makes old cars better than new.** See wonderful mileage guarantees.

Ford	**34 mi.**	**Reo**	**24 mi.**	**Chevrolet**	**32 mi.**
Buick 4	**30 mi.**	**Chalmers**	**23 mi.**	**Maxwell (25)**	**30 mi.**
Buick 6	**24 mi.**	**Olds. 6**	**23 mi.**	**Nash 6**	**23 mi.**
Hudson	**20 mi.**	**Paige 6**	**20 mi.**	**Lincoln 8**	**17 mi.**
Hupp	**25 mi.**	**Oakland 6**	**24 mi.**	**Stdbkr Lt. 6**	**23 mi.**
Dodge	**28 mi.**	**Overland 4**	**32 mi.**	**Cole 8**	**17 mi.**

If your car is not mentioned here send name and model for particulars and our guarantee on it. AGENTS WANTED.

SENT ON 30 DAYS' FREE TRIAL

You can drive any car in heaviest traffic without shifting gears. Starts off on high in any weather without priming or heating—no jerking or choking. No more foul spark plugs or carbon in cylinders. No leaking of gas into crank case. Try it 30 days on our guarantee of money back if not entirely satisfied. **No strings to our guarantee. YOU ARE THE JUDGE.** Anyone who can handle a wrench can attach it. No boring of new holes or changing of operating mechanism. Write today.

AIR-FRICTION CARBURETOR CO.
1065 Raymond Bldg. **Dayton, Ohio, U. S. A.**

109-113 W. 45th St. **Hotel St. James** N. Y. City Times Sq.

Midway between Fifth Avenue and Broadway

An hotel of quiet dignity, having the atmosphere and appointments of a well-conducted home.

Much favored by women traveling without escort. 3 minutes walk to 40 theatres and all best shops.

Rates and Booklet on application

W. JOHNSON QUINN

Here's $200 a Week

for any Man or Woman and a Special Offer for Quick Action-Grab it

I KNOW that there are thousands of men and women who are interested right now in making more money. They want immediate action—without red tape, and without delay. Now I am going to make a personal, special offer that will enable any man or woman to make from $100 to $200 a week, depending upon how much time is devoted to my proposition.

How Much Can You Make?

I want a man or woman in each community to act as my representative—to call on my customers and take their orders for raincoats. That's all there is to it. If you take four average orders a day I will pay you $96 a week. If you take only one average order a day you will make about $24 a week, and that is easy. Hundreds of my representatives are earning that much just in their spare time. For instance, George Garon made $40 clear profit his first day. And there is Harry Swartz of Pennsylvania, whose commissions on one day were $66. And W. S. Cooper, who has averaged over $5,000 a year for six years, working only four hours a day. Just read the records of a few of my representatives—on the right hand side of this page—and you will realize that it is amazingly easy for a man to make from $100 to $200 a week at this proposition.

No Experience Is Needed

It is not necessary for you to have been a salesman. You do not need any previous knowledge about raincoats. I will give you all the information you will ever need. There is no trick to taking orders for Comer All-Weather Coats and the reason is simply this—they are such big bargains that they sell themselves. People like to buy direct from the factory, for the money saved by this method of selling is passed on to the customer.

We manufacture our own coats and sell them direct to our customers by parcel post. Our representatives simply take orders. The values speak for themselves—and with such values, such styles, such materials as we offer, our representatives often take from 2 to 4 orders at a single call.

And because Comer Coats are such big values and sell so easily, E. A. Sweet of Michigan made $1,200 in a single month—Spencer earned $625 in one month's spare time—McCrary increased his earnings from $2 a day to $9,000 a year.

This Is All You Have to Do

All that my representatives do is take orders—**and they get their money immediately.** If your profit for one day is $10, you will have that $10 in cash the same day. You don't carry a stock of coats. You don't put up any money. You don't deliver anything, and I do my own collecting through the mail.

Accept My Special Offer

Now—**the important thing is to get started.** I know that you can make at least $100 within one week of today and have that $100 in **cash.** I know that within a short time you can be making $200 a week—every week. The important thing is to get started, and get started **quick.** If you will fill out the coupon with your name and address, I will send you, without any preliminary correspondence, and with absolutely no deposit whatever on your part, a complete selling outfit with full instructions, samples of raincoat material, style book, order blanks, and everything that you will need to make money. I will write you a letter that is so complete, clear and concise that after you read it you will know absolutely where to go, what to say, and how to make money.

Within the past few weeks I have paid my representatives hundreds of thousands of dollars. And I am willing to make this concession to you—send you the complete outfit, confidential information and instructions at once. So if you are one of those men or women who want a **real opportunity** to establish a big, permanent, substantial and profitable business—if you are sincere and earnest in your desire to make more money, sign and mail the coupon at once. In less than a week you will be making more money than you ever thought possible.

C. E. COMER, The Comer Mfg. Co.
Dept. SBK-73 Dayton, Ohio

J. R. HEAD

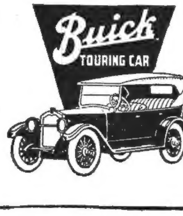
of Kansas, who lives in a small town of 631 people. He has made as high as $69.50 in one day selling Comer All - Weather Coats.

W. S. COOPER

of Ohio, finds it easy to earn over $500 a month selling Comer All - Weather Coats.

E. A. SWEET

an electrical engineer, is making $600 to $1,200 a month and works only about four hours a day.



FREE

In addition to your big earnings I offer you a Buick Touring Car, without a cent of cost, that you can use to help you in developing this great business. Mail the coupon NOW.

Mail This Special Coupon Now

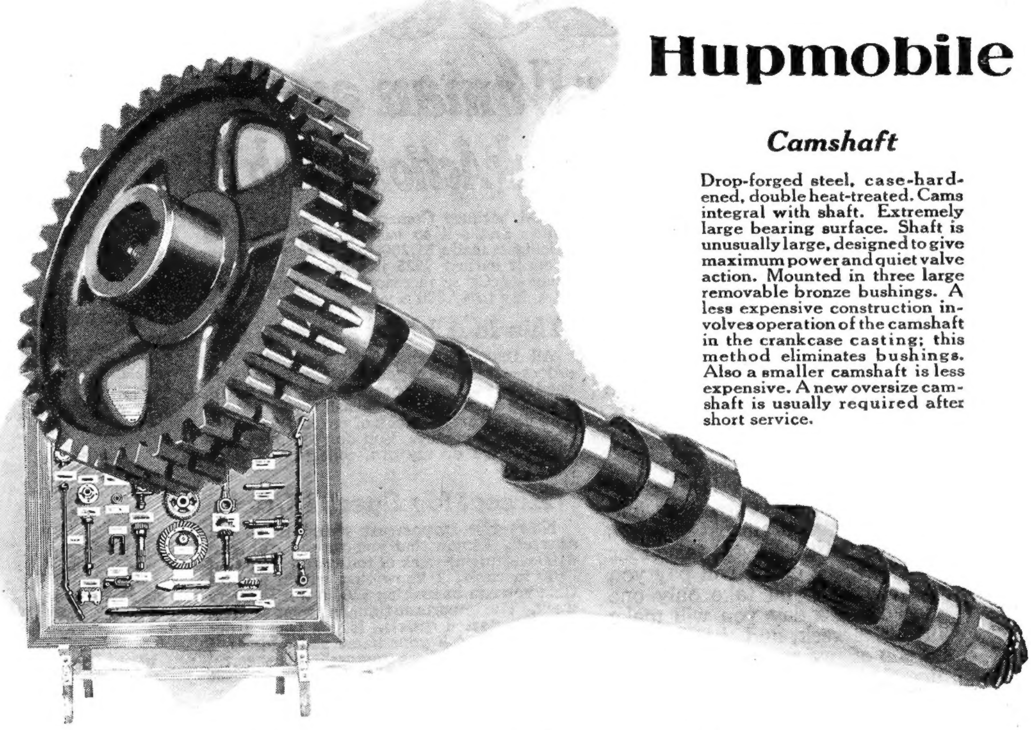
THE COMER MFG. CO.
Dept. SBK-73, Dayton, Ohio

Please send me, without expense or obligation, your special proposition, together with complete outfit and instructions, so I can begin at once to earn money.

Name.......................................

Address.......................................

....
Print or write plainly



Hupmobile

Camshaft

Drop-forged steel, case-hardened, double heat-treated. Cams integral with shaft. Extremely large bearing surface. Shaft is unusually large, designed to give maximum power and quiet valve action. Mounted in three large removable bronze bushings. A less expensive construction involves operation of the camshaft in the crankcase casting; this method eliminates bushings. Also a smaller camshaft is less expensive. A new oversize camshaft is usually required after short service.

Prove to Yourself

That You Can't Get A Better Car Than Hupmobile

Many a man has made a poor automobile purchase because there was no way for him to protect himself.

But there is a way now—a positive way.

How To Be Sure of Your Car

Hupmobile has introduced a new and better element into automobile selling. A sales policy that is as sound and practical as the car itself.

Hupmobile takes all the mystery out of automobile specifications and makes them a very real buying help.

Hupmobile asks you to check the parts in its construction against any car, of any make, at any price.

To check the parts for quality of materials, and for fineness of processing and fabrication.

You will prove to yourself conclusively that there is no better made car than Hupmobile.

Our word for it—Hupmobile is the car for you to buy.

It gives you comfort, luxury, riding and driving ease, an extraordinary verve and pickup, endurance beyond all comparison; thousands and thousands of miles of care-free use; and then a high resale value. And there is a rock-bottom basis for all that.

How to Prove Hupmobile Facts

For we say to you that no car at or near its price can surpass Hupmobile in quality of materials and fineness of manufacturing. Check the parts and prove it for yourself.

Why look around further?—your good sense will tell you that the Hupmobile is the car you ought to buy. Buy it now—you'll be glad of it in the years to come.

Hupp Motor Car Corporation
Detroit, Michigan

Everybody's

NUMBER TWO AUGUST, 1924 VOLUME FIFTY-ONE

If It's in Everybody's It's a Good Story

CONTENTS

A COMPLETE NOVEL

The Accusing Silence (See page 183) ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY 77
Illustrations by STOCKTON MULFORD

EIGHT SHORT STORIES

Mad Money (See page 182) ELIZABETH NEWPORT HEPBURN 9
Illustrations by H. WESTON TAYLOR

Mademoiselle Meddlesome (See page 183) KARL W. DETZER 22

Apartment 4 D (See page 182) ELSA BARKER 29
Illustration by J. SCOTT WILLIAMS

The Second Time ARTHUR MILLS 60

Or Not At All (See page 184) ROBERT SIMPSON 66
Illustration by H. T. FISK

The Getaway Horse SAM CARSON 117

Passion Fruit (See page 182) H. DE VERE STACPOOLE 142

Li Po Comes to New York GORDON MALHERBE HILLMAN 177

THREE SERIALS

The Devonshers HONORÉ WILLSIE MORROW 39
Illustrations by ERNEST FUHR

The Finger of Fire GEORGE KIBBE TURNER 127
Illustrations by ALBIN HENNING

The Citadel JOSEPH HUSBAND 148
Illustration by C. G. GAUL

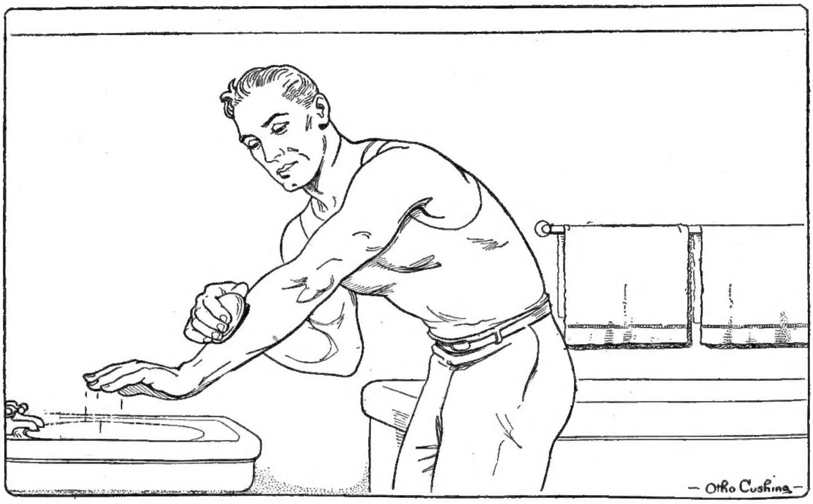
OTHER FEATURES—Poems: Gesture, by William A. Drake, 21; Argosies, by Theda Kenyon, 141. Departments: Everybody's Chimney Corner, 182; Prose and Worse, by Gridley Adams, 185; Everybody's Chestnut Tree, 187. Cover Design by Charles A. MacLellan.

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY THE RIDGWAY COMPANY
JAMES H. GANNON, President C. H. HOLMES, Secy. & Treas.
SPRING AND MACDOUGAL STREETS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

6, Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, W. C., England

Entered as Second-Class Matter, August 16, 1899, at the Post-Office, New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post-Office Department, Ottawa, Canada. Yearly subscription, $2.50, in advance. Single copy, twenty-five cents. Foreign postage, $1.00 additional. No extra postage for Canada.

EVERYBODY'S takes all reasonable precautions for handling manuscripts submitted, but assumes no responsibility for their safety.
Copyright, 1924, by The Ridgway Company, in the United States and Great Britain. Entered at Stationers' Hall, London, England.



Split-second comfort

When you see an earnest face-washer diligently massaging the soap with all the hopefulness of an eager young bond-salesman; when you see his final product, like boiled starch sparsely populated by a few orphaned bubbles, you know this for certain: his soap is not Ivory.

No! With the same effort the Ivoried man would have about a pint of thick, rich, pearly-white lather, lather that ingratiates itself into every pore and gets a warm welcome from everything but dirt.

Now watch your Ivoryless man when he gets to the rinsing stage. As dash after dash of water fails to remove the oiled rubber feeling from his skin, he yields to discouragement and hands the job to the over-worked towel. You know what "rinsing" with a towel means—a skin that feels like owl-wagon pie-crust.

But rinsing Ivory lather is as easy and quick as holing a two-inch putt for a par four. And the face that smiles up from the stainless towel tells a story of gentle Ivory treatment in which justice has been generously tempered with mercy.

PROCTER & GAMBLE

IVORY SOAP

$99\frac{44}{100}\%$ PURE IT FLOATS

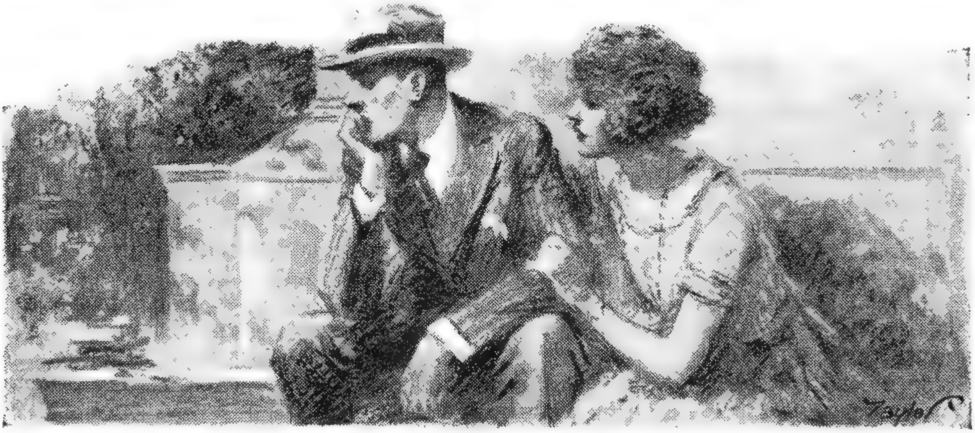
Here is news: When Guest Ivory—the handy new cake of Ivory made especially for washstand use—comes into the home, soap-debates subside like ripples on a quiet pool. Guest Ivory suits husbands, wives, daughters, sisters, cousins and aunts.

© 1924, by The Procter & Gamble Co., Cincinnati

Advertising section continued in rear of book

Everybody's

VOL. 51, NO. 2 AUGUST, 1924 SEWELL HAGGARD, EDITOR



Mad Money

The Romance of Two Unusual Girls and a Man Works Out in a Way to Make You Think There Is Something in the Modern Doctrine After All

By Elizabeth Newport Hepburn

Illustrations by H. Weston Taylor

STEPHEN BREDE sat on the wide step of the bronze statue of a mounted warrior with a winged triumphant angel sweeping him to victory, and faced his own personal defeat!

South of him, beyond the Plaza fountain, two old residences of dead or vanished Americans combined with a new, hurtling tower on West Fifty-seventh Street to produce a strange splendor; to Stephen it looked like some medieval house of God magnified a dozen times. That cathedral effect had been suggested before, by other skyscrapers, but this was different, a magical composite made glorious by the accident of distance, shadow, and perspective. Stephen loved it, and loved too the gay chanticleer figure topping the huge mass: after all, a gigantic cock was no more unrelated to such solemn splendor than the gargoyles on European churches. Though the familiar scene thrilled him, even tonight, it also seemed to question him sharply, as any vast, complete harmony has a way of questioning our puny incompleteness. When he cared so greatly for beauty and character, for harmony, why was it that he should have accomplished so little in the hard-working free-lancing years since he had left his university?

The place he had chosen for reviewing his unsatisfying performance was a popular

Copyright, 1924, by Elizabeth Newport Hepburn.

rendezvous, though he had not realized the fact, or had forgotten it. It was a cool spring night, so the park, on his right, was still uncrowded and the Plaza itself almost empty, yet as he sat on the step at the base of the statue a girl came toward him from the fountain over the way, a girl with painted lips and a little air of deliberate arrogance. She came nearer, sat down quite close to him.

Stephen saw a rather piquant profile under a shabby hat; then the girl lifted a lazy hand and swept off the hat, disclosing a mass of burnished hair. If her mouth and eyes and the details of her toilette had only matched her hair! And then he forgot her, staring at the shadowy pile ahead of him, absorbed in his own troubling thoughts.

"Do you mind giving me a match, if you have one?" said the girl.

Stephen had matches and she thanked him, lighting a cigarette rather prettily. Presently she spoke again.

"I don't talk to strange men, generally. But you look like I *feel*—sort of sick of the whole shootin' match! How'd you like to talk to me about things, 'stead of mumbling to yourself, the way you've been doing?"

Stephen was startled. Was it as bad as that? Had he got into the habit of talking to himself, out loud? She might be common, more or less illiterate, but he rather liked the girl, and wholly liked her shining hair. He smiled—and Stephen's smile was friendly, reassuring.

"All right—if you will, too. But you begin. I take it you have troubles of your own."

She laughed. "You've said it. But my little spiel won't take long. You see, I've been working in a restaurant an' the boss has just fired me. I was cashier when the proprietor was away, and between times I waited on customers. There was one old soak who kept comin' there and makin' love to me—sometimes in rush hours, puttin' me in the spotlight. It wasn't my fault. I never raised a finger, an' I'm not goin' back an' eat humble pie, not if I starve! So I'm wonderin' how long last week's wages and fifty dollars in the savin's bank will hold out—while I hunt me a new job, without a reference.

"An' you're wonderin' whether I'm tellin' God's truth or a fairy tale."

It was quite true: he was. Also he was absently fingering the few loose bills in his pocket, drawn that day from the bank, and with little more to his credit. But she was saying: "It's your turn now—"

"Well, I write what you call 'fairy tales' for a living, so it's easier for me to believe what people tell me—easier than most. And maybe I can help—"

But she shook her head unsmilingly.

"No. Please go on."

IT WAS curious, that he should be talking in this way to the little painted girl on the step beside him, and finding it a relief. He told her about his father, able, successful, and yearning for an able, successful son.

"And then I was wished on him—and I'm like my mother, dreaming dreams, hating routine, sidestepping the beaten highways. Mother liked woodsy paths, perilous climbs up hills, over rocks, across rickety bridges! But she died when I was only eight—Two or three years later father married again, and I went off to school. When I was through college father expected me to go into his factory, but I disappointed him. That was five years ago—and since then I haven't earned half as much as any good, able-bodied plumber or house-painter earns—even allowing for strikes and off time. That's why I'm taking stock tonight."

He hesitated, then stopped. After all, to this little waitress in a restaurant, he could hardly dwell on the compensations he had known—the joy of hunting for the right word, of shaping a paragraph or a poem. But the girl seemed to sense something beyond the obvious.

"What you say is mostly Dutch to me. I don't know what you'd call 'po'try' from the stuff they whoop at you in vawdville. But isn't there some kind of yardstick to measure by—I mean besides money?"

"Well, perhaps," Stephen agreed, warily. "If you mean that even the great poetry—famous, recognized—has never paid the way factories do—"

"An' beauty parlors," said the girl.

"But you see, I'm writing not only verse, but fiction, too, stories for the magazines. And good work in that line brings real money. But my stories keep coming back. I haven't sold more than one in five—perhaps one in ten!"

"But you did sell the tenth?" asked the girl.

"Yes, each year one or two stories—and to decent magazines for a decent price. But of course success like that is mighty close to failure and brings only what amounts to sweatshop wages—taking it on the whole."

His hearer nodded. "I see that. Before the restaurant job I took some dancin' lessons and tried to get in a Broadway cabaret. But when it came to a show-down I couldn't make the grade." She added, after a moment's consideration: "But why don't you tackle your dad and get a job for a while? You might save money, and then go on your own again later on—in a year or two."

"But would that be square," mused Stephen, "—getting him to break me in and then leaving him in the lurch just as I was getting to be worth my salt?"

"But you might stay," she suggested. "Maybe you ain't a genius after all, yet with the guts to make good in business! And then again, maybe what you need is a change—so you can get back to your writin' and score. It's a gamble; heads your father wins, tails you do!"

STEPHEN contemplated the small camouflaged countenance with respect.

"You know, that's a real idea! I might try it out without feeling like a pickpocket." He said in a different tone: "I owe you what they'd call 'Counsel's fees' for that—honestly."

She saw the crisp yellow bill in his hand and shrank back.

"But I'm not—you don't mean—"

"I don't mean anything except that you've just sold me an idea—exactly as I might sell one to an editor! And I'm going to act on it."

They were both standing, looking at each other. He had put the bill gently in her hand, and the gleam of a high lamp brought out the ruddy brightness of her hair. Stephen said suddenly:

"That hair of yours! Why don't you pose for some of the artists—the ones who make magazine covers and illustrate stories?" He mentioned several well-known names. "It may be tiresome work, and risky for the wrong girl. But you have a good strong chin and plenty of artists are very decent."

"I'm not pretty enough," said the girl.

"You would be—and your hair is wonderful! If only—"

"If only—" she repeated.

"I mean I don't like so much powder and lip-stick," said Stephen, smiling. "Careful make-up may be all right, but most of you overdo it so, spoiling the freshness and charm that belong to youth, turning yourselves into little clowns—in petticoats."

His tone was not carping, or superior, but whimsical, and she laughed.

"Maybe you're right."

He was saying good-by. "And I'm really grateful, because you've helped me—"

But she stopped him by a light touch on his arm.

"If there's some girl that you want to marry—*she'll* be grateful, perhaps. People who marry need a lot of money."

He chuckled. "They certainly do! But there's no girl for me. I'm 'wedded to my Muse'—and some day it may turn out to be a successful marriage, after all."

He saw that she had no acquaintance with the illustrious Nine, and added quickly: "But if ever I do marry I hope she'll have red hair—like yours!"

Stephen went to his father's office the following day with a queer feeling of doing exactly the preordained thing. And he asked for a job with a frank statement that he might stick and he might return to his free-lance writing as soon as he should have saved enough to carry him through another year. A big square-jawed man, with what his son called "a poker face," Stephen Brede, Sr., looked at young Stephen thoughtfully.

"All right, son. I'll try you out. No promises for either of us. After all, you can't accuse me of being one of those cast-iron parents who insist upon pouring their offspring into their own mold."

Stephen sighed with relief. "You're a brick, dad," he said gratefully, and waited.

"As it happens I really do need a man in the office to take the place of Sandy Ferguson, who's going up to the factory. It will be some time before you fill his shoes, but there's no reason why you shouldn't start in tomorrow."

That first week in the employ of the Brede Manufacturing Company seemed to Stephen almost like child's play after the years of writing, rewriting, copying, and then trying to place his own manuscripts.

Yet the morning he actually dictated a sheaf of letters to the ablest stenographer in the office, after a long conference with his father, he discovered his own ineptness at dictation with surprise.

His father had said to him: "Adelaide Jennifer will show you the ropes, Steve." She was a tall girl, looking almost as tall as Stephen himself, very straight and slender, and she wore official-looking shell-rimmed spectacles. The thing that mitigated her alarming look of efficiency was her hair, red as the hair of that girl he had met on the steps of the statue. In Stephen's austere office cubicle, the spot of light and color made by that shining head was absolutely startling. Yet the girl herself was reticent, impersonal, absorbed in her work.

He had been dictating for an hour or more one day, when, during a moment of respite, the young secretary took off her glasses and briskly polished them. Stephen glanced up and saw her absently rubbing them upon the white petticoat under her linen frock. He saw, too, her remote expression, the young curve of her cheek, the slimness of her ankles, and her surprising eyes—not the usual blue or brown but rare topaz.

"I didn't know girls wore them nowadays," he remarked.

She looked up, puzzled, then as his words percolated through her abstraction she blushed vividly.

"I did think I'd cured myself of that awful habit! Yes, Mr. Brede, we still wear petticoats—under summer frocks. And I never can keep my handkerchiefs. I'm quite sure the wives of Fifth Avenue bus conductors never have to buy any!"

After this episode Stephen felt less in awe of his secretary, or his mentor, as she frequently seemed to be. When he spoke of her to his father the older Brede said with marked enthusiasm: "She's a rare girl, Adelaide Jennifer—a lady, the old Staten Island Jennifers, well educated, and as bright as they're made. Been here for years, and now we ought to be paying considerably more for her grade of efficiency. But I can't very well give her more than Miss Marbury, my own secretary, who's been here since the office opened. Yet in some of the big law offices Miss Jennifer could better herself, and I've told her so."

"What did she say?"

Stephen Brede chuckled as at some preposterous but intriguing jest.

"Said she liked to work for us—that if I could manage it she'd like more time off—but that she was *getting enough money!* Stephen, I've been in this business over thirty years but that's the first time I ever heard such a confession from an enployee. It almost frightened me! So now Miss Jennifer isn't expected down on Saturdays—except in rush seasons—and she gets six weeks off in the summer. Apparently she's perfectly satisfied, though sometimes I feel mean when I make out her check."

"I don't see why you should," said Stephen promptly, but none the less the son was conscious of some pride in this poker-faced parent of his. That night, in his one-room-and-bath beyond Second Avenue young Stephen wrote hard until after midnight. He sold the poem promptly, and to a Parnassian editor who had hitherto ignored his modest productions. And Stephen had called his poem "The Just Man."

ONE busy Saturday a month later there was an unusual rush of work at the office, so that Miss Jennifer had been asked to come down on her off day. The place had seethed with activity, but at five every one had gone save Stephen himself and Adelaide Jennifer. Through an open door he saw the girl sitting limply in her chair, glasses off, her oval face much too pale and her figure looking almost attenuated in its sheathlike summer frock.

He stopped beside her desk.

"Look here, Miss Jennifer, you're all in—working in your off time and when it's hotter than Tophet! Come down to the beach with me. We'll sail, or swim, or just lie in the sand—and later, after a cool dinner, we'll come home on the boat."

She looked at him blankly, and he had a depressing reaction.

"That is, if you don't think I'm too darned casual," he added. "You see, I'm not a conventional person—I've been on my own too long."

She laughed at his tone. "Nor am I, Mr. Brede. Nor for that matter is your father. He's taken me out to lunch several times, and once with your sister. And your stepmother has invited me to the Long Island place."

Stephen felt reassured. "Good for my family! But why didn't you go?"

She smiled at him as she adjusted her hat and tucked her hair under it in some queer feminine fashion that amused him. "I always meant to. But you see, I'm as busy at home as I am here."

He had visions of poverty, of an invalid mother, perhaps: but no, he recollected that her parents were both dead. But competent women always seemed to have a slue of idle relatives waiting to be fed. . . . She was ready, and they started off together; but in the hall she seemed to have forgotten something. With a murmured apology she sped back to her desk, returning, breathless, just as the belated elevator appeared. Stephen saw her stuffing a greenback in her gray handbag.

"What did you get that for?" he asked as the elevator dropped them into infinity. In the street she answered his question.

"I take lots of chances, Mr. Brede. But I'm too canny to go anywhere with a man without taking 'mad money' along."

"What in time is 'mad money'?"

She chuckled. "How ignorant you are! Any little shop-girl will tell you that it's risky to accept invitations from 'gentlemen friends' without carrying carfare at least. Suppose they quarrel!"

"What a peach of a phrase—'mad money,'" said Stephen. "But you and I aren't going to quarrel, are we?"

Her shining eyes laughed at him. "How do I know? In this queer world we must be ready for anything at any moment!"

ADELAIDE JENNIFER proved to be a most satisfactory companion. Like that other red-headed girl she made Stephen talk about himself—his writing, his plans for future work. But she knew all about the Muses, and the jargon that writers talk. She had even read a number of Stephen's published poems scattered in the magazines. But what puzzled her was why he had recently gone into the office.

He started to tell her of the little adventure on the steps of the statue, and then decided that it wouldn't be fair to that other girl. So he explained his position more prosaically, told her about his short stories that wouldn't sell, and was most gloriously egotistic and literary. They talked the moon high, and had a late dinner at the hotel, a dinner cool, crisp and perfect, and likewise punctuated with much conversation. At last, homeward-bound, they fell silent. For there, on the steamer's upper deck, dim, adjacent profiles, interlacing arms, and long eloquent silences seemed the proper procedure. And at least they could achieve the silences! Finally on the steps of an old-style apartment house on Central Park West Stephen said good night, and for an instant held her cool hand.

"It's been bully to have you, Miss Jennifer. I've had a wonderful evening."

"So have I," she confessed. "I was dog-tired when we started, but the beach—all that life and color and sea wind—have ironed me out. I feel as good as new!"

After that they had stray hours together now and then: sometimes they lunched tête-à-tête, or walked uptown on the cooler afternoons. But when Stephen asked her to go to the beach again on a Saturday or Sunday, she declined.

"I'm so sorry that I have an engagement," she would tell him sweetly. Her reticence as to how she spent these week-ends puzzled Stephen. It was none of his business, of course; but how little they really seemed to know about her, in the office! She was on excellent terms with the entire force, yet somehow remote and impersonal. Stephen felt astonished and even somewhat alarmed at his own mounting curiosity. Yet it seemed to him, sometimes, that the one person who might have satisfied this curiosity was his father. When Miss Jennifer's name was mentioned Brede, Senior, had a way of looking alert, of smiling a little; and there was often a mixture of affection and respect in his manner toward her which interested Stephen and still further piqued his curiosity.

Stephen himself was very busy at this time, writing in the evenings, despite the heat and the long days at the office. Miss Jennifer had casually remarked, one day, how much one could accomplish after office hours and on Sundays, and while she remained maddeningly uncommunicative about her own affairs her smallest suggestion was beginning to influence Stephen.

He told himself that she was probably engaged to some dull nut who took up most of her off time; he detested this greedy unknown, mentally consigning him to a warmer climate than even Manhattan in the dog-days. And still Miss Jennifer's tastes and opinions affected the younger

Brede to a degree wholly out of proportion to the amount of time he actually spent in her society. And then came a sharp turn, a quick climax.

IT HAD been hot, one of the most exhausting, demoralizing days of the summer, and Stephen's room in the evening was an oven. Writing in that place, at that hour, was clearly impossible and he rang up Adelaide on the telephone. Would she go with him to drive, or to some roof garden, where they might cool off? Her hesitation irritated him—everything irritated him tonight—but she agreed to go, and twenty minutes later he arrived, in a taxicab. She was waiting for him downstairs, sitting on the stone step like a girl in a country town, on her front porch, and this also increased Stephen's grievance against the Universe.

He felt extravagant and reckless, and they drove far beyond the city, and at last stopped at a gay little inn on a hilltop. At a table beside a huge window they ate something crisp and cold and looked westward toward the Hudson, winding like a silver thread between purple hills. Later on they sat on a green velvet terrace and watched the sunset, and as usual Stephen talked about his work.

"This business of writing at night, in summer, after working all day, is ridiculous, impossible," he wound up fiercely.

For once her reply was neither tactful nor sympathetic.

"Then get up earlier. You never reach the office before ten. You could put in two hours of writing while you're fresh."

She added, before he had time to reply to this preposterous suggestion:

"After all, the mark of the strong in this world is their power to focus upon the thing they want most—and *get it*—in spite of every obstacle!"

Stephen's smoldering temper flared up suddenly.

"Rot! Utter, abject rot! If you'd ever done any creative work yourself you'd know that the artist must have decent working conditions. A man can't do things fine, sensitive, beautiful, when his days are given over to mere potboiling. That sort of miracle only blossoms in sentimental novels, the kind that are written by ignorant old maids."

He realized suddenly how angry she was, as he sat staring at her stiffened figure and the burning cheek turned away from him. A moment before he had been a mere minor poet and embryo novelist, indecently self-absorbed: now he became an incautious, passionate man.

"Adelaide, I didn't mean that! Oh, good Lord, I'm a fool, a blind, brainless idiot! . . . Darling, I'm in love with you, as I've never been before in all my life!"

This was abrupt, and still hopelessly tactless. There was a long, quite dreadful silence. Then he said quietly, in another tone:

"Say that you care, too, Adelaide."

She was still sitting like a young female ramrod, but he caught a glimpse of her face. In it he saw surprise, consternation, and then a swift instinctive response that changed her very features. Her mouth was tremulous, her great eyes shone upon him—and then her words were contradicting all that her face had revealed.

"No, Stephen, no! We can't, we mustn't! The whole trouble is that you don't know me—the real Adelaide Jennifer. This is just midsummer madness—youth—"

Stephen's hand, firm and warm, pressed her knee, found her hand.

"Dear, I don't believe you. What's more, you don't believe yourself!"

For a breath-taking moment she leaned toward him: there was a sort of lovely glamour about her smile, a dream in her eyes. Then she moved away.

"I tell you, Stephen, you don't understand. But come to my place, say Friday evening. When you see me on my own ground you'll realize how impossible it all is. You won't even *want* me, then!"

"Won't I?" he asked, and almost wished that he might believe her. For his freedom seemed to be slipping from him. He felt his whole being caught and held fast by this dreadful, obsessing need of her!

IT CAME at last, the moment when he climbed her stair and rapped on her door with the claws of a brass knocker. Then a short, dark-haired woman in a smock and a pleated skirt was looking at him.

"We've been expecting you, Mr. Brede. Adelaide had to go out on business but she'll be back soon. Of course I'm her friend, Clay Merrifield."

He was in a large room into which several doors opened, not the usual crowded living-room in the small apartment, but a studio. The walls were hung with a few old tapestries but principally with sketches and studies. In spite of his disappointment at not seeing Adelaide at once, Stephen was interested. His wander year in Europe and the exhibition habit had given him some knowledge of modern art. He realized at once that these canvases were daring, clever, in one or two instances astonishingly beautiful. How queer of Adelaide—not to tell him that her friend painted! He stopped prowling about the place at last to say:

"Where on earth did you study, Miss Merrifield? And why haven't you exhibited more? Your technique reminds me of Barrie's dialogue—it looks so easy, and is really the height of sophistication."

She was staring at him in astonishment. "*My* technique! Mr. Brede, Adelaide's played a trick on you. They are her pictures—I'm a trained nurse!"

Stephen stopped in the middle of the room, staring. The little dark woman went on swiftly:

"Oh, she loves to be modest, mysterious! And she hasn't wanted the people at the office to know—she's always felt they would assume her less efficient if they realized that she was an artist. Except your father—he's known for a long time. She's been studying at a night school, with special classes on Sundays. Mr. Henri said the other day that she's the most promising pupil he's had in years—that if she keeps at it she'll go far. Of course he's assuming that she won't tie herself up—by marrying."

"You think marriage fatal to a woman's talent?"

"It shouldn't be, and yet it usually is. But it's not so much the fact of marriage, or even of children. The deadening influence is male egotism—the husband's assumption that *his* affairs, even his mere whims and prejudices, are far more important than any gift of his wife's. As a professional nurse I've seen things that were sickening—women of real power and promise married to little piffling, nagging men who sapped their vitality, choked their ambition—"

She stopped speaking as abruptly as she had begun: Stephen felt her relentless eyes scorching that male egotism in himself which had always assumed that his own possibilities as a writer must mean more than any private taste or ability of Adelaide Jennifer. But that was the girl's doing, the fault of her absurd secretiveness. . . . Then he heard a step on the stair and as Adelaide entered by one door her housemate disappeared through another.

"Oh, Stephen, I'm so glad you're here!"

She paused, her hand still in his, conscious of his passiveness, his lack of response. "Clay has told you, hasn't she? I mean about the painting. Heaven knows I've tried to tell you a dozen times!"

"And yet my father has known all along," said Stephen.

She smiled at that. "Your father is—wonderful! He's helped me so much, in so many ways. You see, I had to tell him why I wanted so much time off. But other people at the office—somehow I didn't want to talk about it to them. They might have thought me the posing, high-brow kind. It was much simpler just to remain a stenographer."

SHE sat beside him on the divan, and they looked about the room, at the pictures on the walls—sketches of dim woods and of gleaming marshes; vivid portrait studies that seemed queerly alive. Stephen said slowly:

"They're good, Adelaide! Better than anything I've done—perhaps ever will do! But—as you once asked me—why the office? Surely you might have illustrated, or taught."

"Yes, but I've always hated teaching. And I hadn't the technique or the models for illustrating. I suppose I've felt that success—for the artist—is a creature of whims, a chancy, wild thing. You can't count on it to pay your bills, as with a salary. So I earned mine at the office as another kind of 'mad money,' in case the art I loved should fool me, trick me. Don't you see?"

Stephen did—and it seemed to him that he saw also that scorn on the face of Clay Merrifield for "male egotism." Yet his lips tightened, his jaw was firm. He knew what he wanted. He said quietly:

"It's awkward, this finding you an artist, with real power, Adelaide. But it hasn't changed me. I still want to marry you."

The color in her face deepened.

"Stephen, how can we? You want to write as much as I want to paint, and there is no money. I've been planning to give up my job in the fall if there seems any market for my work. And you've been saving up so that you can go back to your free-lance writing. For it's hard getting anywhere while one has routine work eight hours a day. Oh, I know!"

She added after a pause: "Our marrying would be impossible—sheer lunacy."

Exactly what Stephen had been telling himself, yet now he felt only scorn for such dull wisdom. Emotion seized him, transfused his universe and turned this red-haired girl into a fleeing nymph—no, a goddess! Yet there was nothing humble or apologetic about the way he kissed her, and certainly there seemed to be response in her flushed cheeks and shining eyes. Yet a moment afterward she was protesting passionately:

"Stephen, I can't let you sweep me off my feet. It isn't *sane!*"

"Darling, am I the only lunatic? Don't you care, too?"

But she drew back; in some mysterious way that exquisite softness about her had vanished. She became remote, almost impersonal.

"I mustn't care—I don't want to care! It's my work I love most—the work I've sacrificed friends and health and freedom for! I'm one-ideaed, self-centered—whatever happens I've got to paint! I can't even give it up for the love every girl dreams about—not even for you, Stephen."

He stared at her unbelievingly. If her eyes were eager her lips were firmly set, her young figure braced, as of one warding off some insidious temptation. Stephen felt numb, queerly incapable of making some instinctive adjustment which might have saved the situation. All he could do was to stammer:

"I'm not asking you to give up anything. I'm saying good night. . . ."

Yet his memory of her face was puzzling, the full chin set firmly, the lips compressed, and those strange eyes of hers gleaming—and wet!

During the next week he saw her only at the office and through a fog of hurry and heat and driving work. She had begged him to give her time—not to open the subject again for a month. And then one day she did not come down– and Stephen learned through his father that she had gone away on her vacation. The letter that reached him the next day seemed like salt in an open wound.

> Stephen, I'm going off without seeing you. You were right; I'm crazy, too—more so than I've ever been about any man. But I care for my painting, and for the books you're going to write. As I see it, marriage for us would be a fatal mistake. Just the same, writing this letter is hard—more so than you will believe. Yet I suppose the less you do believe—the less you think of me—the better for you. So much easier will it be—just forgetting.
>
> Adelaide.

To some one else it might have seemed rather a forlorn and pitiful little letter, but rage and not pathos gripped Stephen. Oh, very well! If that was the way she felt he would not raise a finger to change her attitude. And in a few months he would be thanking his stars that he was not shackled and caged as his folly deserved. . . .

ON AN Indian summer evening that same fall Stephen Brede sat once more on the stone step of the triumphant bronze warrior. Presently he was going to his room to begin a new chapter in his book, growing so slowly—for it was appalling what drudgery writing had become. He had kept on doggedly, all through the empty, dreary days of September—but where were they gone, the vivid scenes he had imagined, the crisp dialogue he had planned, the whole effect of adventurous poignant youth, seen through the medium of a compelling realism?

Grimly he stared at the cathedral-like group of buildings, at the fountain, and the bronze girl, and the lights pricking through the deep blue velvet of the night. Beauty was there, but it left him lonely and cold. It came to him that Adelaide Jennifer had not only taken herself out of his life—she had resigned her position the first of September—but she had also taken with her his old pleasure in color and form, even that driving energy and power to concentrate without which no distinctive work of the imagination may be accomplished.

Suddenly his reverie was interrupted. He started and turned.

A hand had touched his sleeve, and he was looking straight into the eyes of the girl he had met in this same place many months ago. The same girl, certainly—but altered, well dressed, and if she was rouged at all it was so delicately that Stephen could not detect it. She said quietly:

"I knew you'd come back—some day."

He found himself shaking hands as if they were old friends.

"I wouldn't have known you! What have you done to yourself?"

She laughed at his mystification. "Then you like it? I'm glad, but of course you did it all."

"I did what?" said Stephen.

"Oh, sent me to the artists who have been paintin' me all summer. There's one, in particular. He does magazine covers, and I've sat for five. He says I'm his 'lucky penny' "—and she mentioned a name Stephen knew.

They sat on the stone step, side by side, little human puppets pulled by unseen strings. Stephen decided that she had grown incredibly pretty and, what was better, that this new life of hers had developed a subtle charm he had not divined before. And then she was suddenly dragging him from safe externals to that inner shrine he would have supposed forever guarded from red-haired waifs.

"You've found her!" the girl said.

"Found who?" Stephen demanded, ungrammatical and curious.

"The woman you want to marry, of course. Tell me, has she got red hair?"

His face burned, but he laughed.

"How on earth— Well, yes. I thought I had found her—and her hair is red! But it's all over before it really began. I don't even know where she is."

"You quarreled?"

"Yes. And I don't expect ever to see her again. Sometimes I hope I won't! And then again—"

She pondered over this. "Is it because she writes, too?"

The creature was almost uncanny, but Stephen merely shrugged his rather lean shoulders. "Worse! She paints. And does it better than I do anything—or ever will! The thing is an infernal mess—but it's over—a dead issue. Now let's talk about you."

She had prospered. She had a position four nights a week as cashier at a small, popular restaurant, and during the day she posed—not only for the artist who used her as a model for his cover designs, but also for a mural decorator and two or three women who illustrated serials and stories.

"In good weeks I make forty dollars—more, counting the restaurant money. You must get your dinner there some evening. It will be good—"

Stephen enjoyed the encounter and it ended with his seeing her home, to a decent, well-kept model tenement in the East Fifties.

"I'VE three cunnin' little rooms," she told him, and put a finger on her own mail box, which bore the inscription "Miss Molly Ray."

Stephen had already told her his own name and address, and he said quickly: "You're going to let me come and see you now and then, Molly Ray?"

Her blush was intriguing, but later it worried him. Of course he had no business going to see her. Yet he was lonely, and there was a queer stimulus in Molly Ray's naïve admiration. Human nature being the complex, tricky thing it is, he went home that night and wrote such a swift, vivid chapter that he promptly destroyed certain other painstaking but dreary pages, scornful of their mediocrity. Hope and imagination both had been freshly kindled by contact with that small human dynamo, Molly Ray!

He saw her frequently during the next few months. Her tiny flat was bare and cheap, but it was homelike and exquisitely clean. There were a few comfortable chairs, a little folding table, a couch with a gay chintz cover, and in her window some flourishing red geraniums. Stephen soon found that she had a gift for making things grow.

Moreover there were some sketches on her walls, generally of herself, and given her by the artists for whom she posed—one was a really lovely study of Molly's bright head in colored chalk. Stephen helped her to hang these more effectively, and when Thanksgiving came he sent her fruit and chocolates, and also a quaint mirror in an old gilt frame. Her childlike joy in these simple gifts touched him, and as the winter passed he formed the habit of going to the little apartment once or twice a week. He took her books, and now and then a magazine containing a poem or story of his.

Sometimes he read aloud as she sat sewing in her little wicker rocker. And because of the gap between them—the gap made by Stephen's educational and social advantages contrasted with Molly's endless ignorances—he lulled himself into a feeling of security. She understood, and things would be quite all right. He would never talk sentiment or make love, and it would remain a pleasant prosy little friendship. When it ended she would be better equipped for her work by having known him. . . . Already one painter had told her that she was becoming more valuable to him, impersonating more sympathetically the characters for whom she posed. This small tribute pleased her immensely, and pleased Stephen too.

One evening Stephen found himself restless and stale. It was Friday, and he usually saw Molly only on Wednesday and Sunday. But he knew that it was not one of her nights at the restaurant, and at half-past eight he threw down his fountain pen and gave up his attempt to begin a fresh chapter.

All day long he had been irritable, unable to concentrate, hating the office routine as he now hated his book. What he wanted—oh, he knew what it was! Simply Adelaide Jennifer, the sound of her soft deep voice, the consciousness of that quiet power of hers, like nothing he had ever known before in a woman. She might be a genius—he was horribly afraid that she was. But he wanted her as he had never wanted any one or anything before. And he could not have her—she cared nothing for him; the entire world was a gray, depressing waste.

It was in this mood of frustration that he went to Molly.

AS IT fell out, the door of her house was open, and he went in, absently failing to ring her bell in the vestibule. When he knocked on the door of the little flat on the fourth floor a voice said "Come in," but he waited, suddenly realizing that he should not have gone up without warning her. Then the door opened, and Molly stood looking at him, a delightful Molly in a gay Japanese kimono, her splendid hair falling over her shoulders. She gave a quick little cry of surprise, then laughed up at him.

"I thought you were the janitor, Mr. Brede! He was coming up to fix a faucet."

Stephen apologized, said that he would go down and wait, but the door had swung to, and he never really knew which of them made that first forward step. In any case Molly was in his arms, warm, lovely, breathless. Even at that moment Stephen knew that it was not Molly whom he loved—that his feeling for her was ephemeral, a passion of the moment. Yet his very frustrated love for Adelaide Jennifer had awakened in his clean youth this fiery emotion that was sweeping him off his feet.

The red hair, the round white arms, the little sob of sheer joy which Molly gave—all these thrilled his senses, appealing to that awakened longing in him, the longing for love, for this girl's eager, uncalculating response. He sat down on the chintz-covered couch with Molly in his arms. Her kisses were on his lips, her blown hair against his cheek. After that first exquisite moment she whispered:

"Stephen, I mustn't—unless you do care—really!"

He ought to have let her go then, but instead he kissed her soft lips, her bent bright head, the lovely line of her throat.

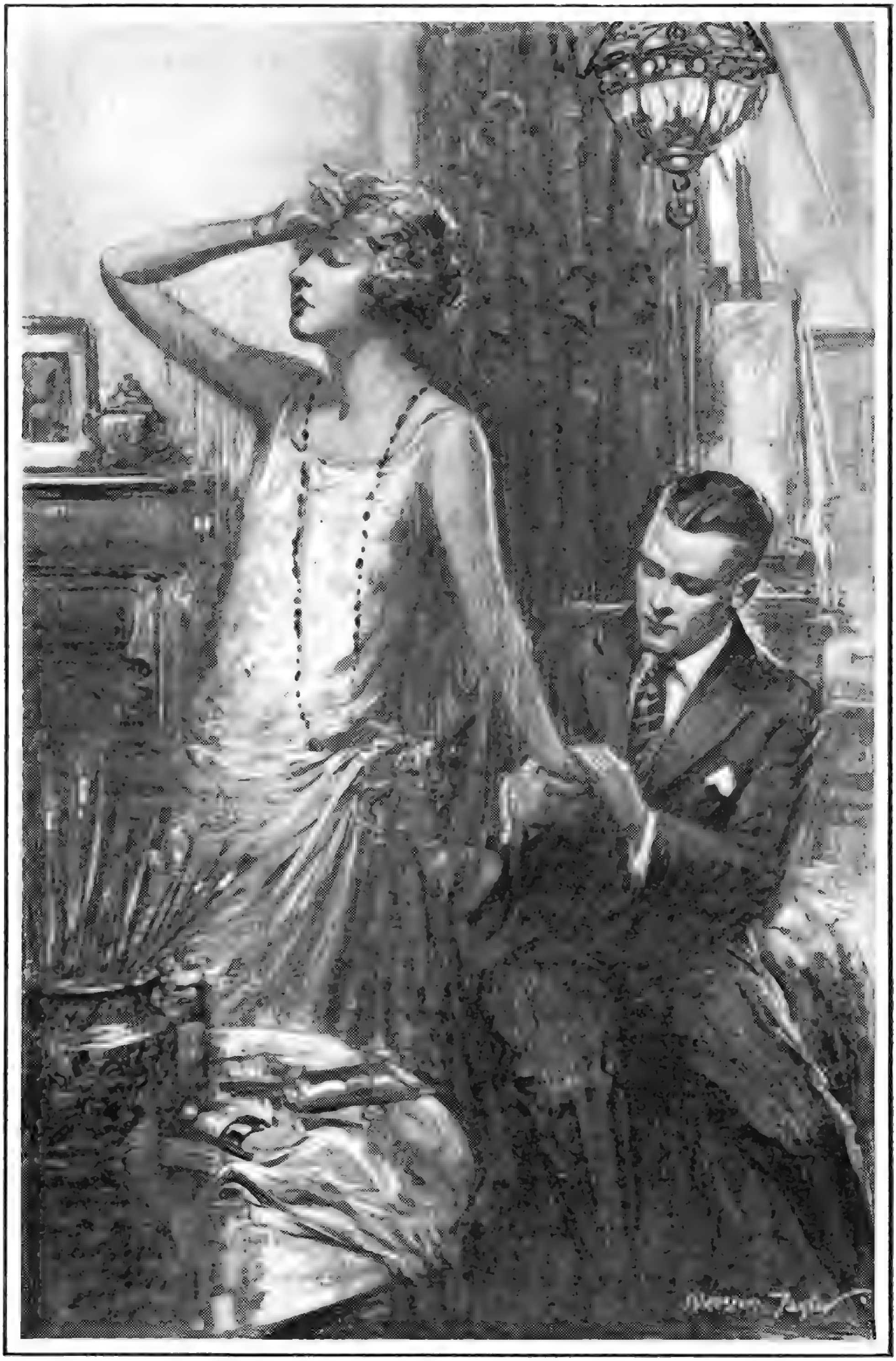
The words of an old song came to him, rhythmical, half ironic: "Gather ye rose-buds while ye may. . . ." She was a rosebud, this little, warm, loving Molly. And then, incredibly and utterly he forgot her, remembered the other woman for whom his kisses were meant. With that startling, instinctive honesty of lovers in tense moments he breathed a name:

"Adelaide! Oh, Adelaide!"

Molly Ray freed herself with one swift movement, and sprang away from him. She held her head up, but the tears were running down her cheeks.

"I can't— Oh, Stephen! It's not *me* you're thinkin' about—not me that you—love. . . ."

He wrote a note the next day, apologetic, tender, but honest, and sent her some books he had promised her earlier, and also an armful of roses. But he stayed away, religiously. And the decision to do so was one of the hardest he had ever made—and kept. He worked on his book, doggedly, night after night, and continued to make good at the office, to the elder Stephen's obvious satisfaction. Apparently one could



In some mysterious way that exquisite softness about her vanished. She became remote. "I mustn't care—I don't want to care. It's my work I love most."

live on and labor unceasingly, and even give an excellent imitation of success, despite a thwarted passion and a lost love!

IT WAS one morning in May that Stephen received a note in a straggling but legible hand:

> Go to the exhibition on Fifty-seventh Street and see my portrait. It's taken a prize. And I'll be there Saturday afternoon, around four. Do go, please. MOLLY.

Stephen told himself that an art exhibition was an excellent place for them to meet, impersonal and safe.

He left the office early and, once in the galleries where the exhibition was held, he had no trouble finding the portrait. It was in the main room, on the line, and from the frame depended the legend:

"Winner of the Hammerton Prize."

Stephen had forgotten to buy a catalogue, but he heard some one say that the title of the picture was simply "Red Hair"; and it was an instantly recognizable portrait of Molly—Molly in that bright kimono, with her hair loose about her little pointed face. The thing was crisply painted, with a brush that seemed to have been dipped into something more living than mere blobs of paint on a palette. Stephen stood before it, touched with a vicarious pride. This was the Molly he had helped to make, still ignorant and young, but with a fresh, appealing beauty unspoiled by cheap cosmetics, and a sort of naïve wisdom that seemed to him infinitely touching.

People stood about the portrait, talking. Stephen heard some one—a heavy-browed, middle-aged man with a Vandyke beard—discourse about Velasquez—"his kind of directness, you know, and that damned assurance you don't often see justified, nowadays, in these cubic caricatures!"

Young Stephen Brede was conscious of stirrings of recognition within himself. He knew this crisp, distinctive brushwork—quite apart from this portrait of Molly. He seemed to be again in a studio, listening to a little, dark woman ranting passionately about the egotism of husbands. Just at this moment he saw her coming—not Molly, but Adelaide Jennifer.

It was no accidental meeting, he knew instantly. Molly had remembered the name he had once spoken, and had put two and two together, with her quick intelligence. She had suggested his coming here that he might meet Adelaide—this triumphant, prize-winning Adelaide. And it was extraordinary how little it mattered—success or failure. . . .

Before the eyes of those chattering critics, and shabby art-students, and well-groomed Philistines, Stephen Brede stepped forward and took Miss Jennifer's arm. People had recognized her, were speaking to her, but he steered her gently, and it seemed casually, through the long, crowded galleries, into the spaciousness of West Fifty-seventh Street. There the late afternoon was purple and gold under a marvelous sky. They walked on, toward the Avenue, the spring wind against their hot faces, Stephen's fingers gripping the girl's arm so that the delicate flesh ached, and she was glad of the pain.

"You're thin," he said accusingly, "dreadfully thin!" He was conscious, too, that she did not look in the least triumphant, or beautiful, as he remembered her. And it did not matter in the least—whether she were beautiful or homely, conquering or conquered. . . . Then he realized that she was crying, incredible as it seemed, there, on the street, like any little schoolgirl.

"STEPHEN, I didn't believe in it—love like this—love that turns success to failure, so that all the years ahead look endless and empty. . . . Oh, Stephen! Suppose you hadn't come!"

"But I did, and you did—and it was Molly who brought me, the girl you painted! . . ."

He hailed a cruising taxicab and they sat close and held each other's hands, like children who have been badly frightened.

"I suppose it's just as mad as ever, Stephen. But I don't care. I'll do anything you say. I mean if you still want me to—marry you—"

"I still do," he said. "And tomorrow we'll get the license, and pack our bags, and your palette and brushes, and be off for a little sea trip—Panama or Nova Scotia—it doesn't matter. I've got a holiday coming to me. And some day it will be Italy!"

"You talk as though we weren't going to be poor, Stephen, as though some one were giving us five thousand a year—"

"Some one is going to," said Stephen firmly. "You see, Adelaide, you're the one with the real talent—established, recognized, no longer problematical. So you're to have your studio and paint—and I'll stay on in the office. It's my stunt to earn the 'mad money' for us both. Dad gave me a raise last week—and promised me more when I married—he seemed to have some uncanny realization about us, that there was some 'lost lady'—and that you were she! He just mentioned your name once—but I knew that he knew—"

"Oh, your father! He's a darling!" she murmured. She moved closer: in the windy freshness of the park her hair blew in Stephen's eyes, her soft cheek touched his.

With the impact and sharpness of pain, Happiness thrust at them, harrying them with that lean dread at the back of all mortal joy.

It was later that Adelaide said: "Dear, Molly told me that you would be at the exhibition. So you see I ran after you—after swearing to myself that I never, never would!"

Somehow that seemed more miraculous, to him, than anything else that had happened.

But on the way home Adelaide spoke again, passionately.

"And, Stephen, we'll manage somehow. You shall write your books yet. Oh, my dear, I want things for you—wonderful things!"

UNDER the great shining figure of Fame a little figure sat alone, very still. The night was freshening so that she drew her loose cape closer. A prowling male figure came toward her, with a slinking, panther-like tread. "Dearie, this is a fine—" But the girl was gone, without a backward glance, fleet, disdainful. Five minutes later she climbed an endless stair and unlocked her own door. The lamp Stephen had given her last Christmas glowed at her touch. She looked about the place, at the books he had given her, at the sketch he had liked best, at the big chair in which he had always sat. Life was not so much like the movies as certain writers would have one believe: there was a word for the way things happened—a word Stephen had been fond of—"realism."

But she said aloud:

"Anyway, this place is mine. An' I wouldn't have had it except for him. An' I'm honest. I've played fair."

She thought of the way those two had looked in the gallery, Stephen leading Miss Jennifer away, the young artist herself appearing strange, and young, and somehow helpless, as Molly had never seen her look before. And his face—Molly had seen on it that same expression before—the night he had kissed her—and called her "Adelaide."

She went to sniff the fragrance of the flowers growing in her window boxes, and tears splashed upon the bright petals. But she straightened herself and caught her reflection in the mirror Stephen had given her. Was it blurred? No, it was only her silly eyes. Molly Ray said aloud:

"Anyway, she was awfully nice to me, an' she painted my portrait, and it took the prize. An' I helped them—it might have taken a long time for them to get together. An' I've got it too—red hair!"

Gesture

By William A. Drake

LOVE me for love's sake only, or love me not at all:
I would not have you come to me because I call.

Let your love flow, a blessing unforced, unsought:
A gift that must be pleaded for is less than naught.

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1924

Mademoiselle Meddlesome

Art Is Not Always Incompatible with Success, but There Is Sometimes Fun in Finding It Out for Yourself

By Karl W. Detzer

ADRIAN wrote "Finis" and threw his pen out of the window. It was done—the final curtain of the final scene. He stacked the sheets and counted them—four hundred and twenty-six. Then he remembered that he had not dined. But when had he eaten? He tried to think. Was it yesterday morning, or the morning before, or the morning before that? What matter?

Do not imagine for a moment that Adrian was poor. He would have resented bitterly so gross an implication. In his pocket, untouched, lay currency of France, the five francs he had borrowed from Benoit. Poor? Not Adrian.

So, now that the play was written, he went forth to dine. First he carefully weighted the sheets with an inkwell, and set the basin under the place where the roof leaked. As he ran across the courtyard past the gatekeeper's house, he avoided his landlady, feigning deafness when she screamed at him. A landlady with bills when he had just finished a comedy? That would be sacrilege!

To the Café of the Golden Lark he galloped, for there he knew he would find Benoit and Caesar, anxious for news. At the front door he met old Madame Montbazon, the proprietress.

"Ah, Monsieur Adrian!" she smiled. "There is a little matter here, a bill which you—"

"For shame!" Adrian slowed his steps and shook his head sadly. "You approach a customer in that manner!"

"But, monsieur, it has been three weeks last Thursday!"

"Only three weeks?" Adrian drew back aghast. "Only three weeks, and you make a public spectacle of me?"

"But business—you know how business is?"

"Sh!" Adrian touched the ample shoulder of Madame Montbazon. "Sh! Not a word! I have a secret, for your pretty ears alone."

He led Madame to a table, he made dry noises in his throat, and Madame ordered wine.

"I have written a play—perhaps the brightest comedy that Paris will see this century. And today it is finished. Ah, it is a brilliant piece! Soon it will be upon the stage, and I, Adrian, shall be the talk of Paris!

"The great ladies will say: 'Where can we find him, this Adrian?' And others will answer them: 'Every night in the Café of the Golden Lark.' Pst! Like that, your room will be crowded! Men of wealth, women of wit come hurrying here in search of the great Adrian. Madame, think of it, you are made!"

So impressed was Madame Montbazon that she ordered another glass for Adrian. And at that moment Caesar heard the voice of his friend through the heavy door of the back room, and he rushed in breathlessly, with Benoit at his heels.

"Ah, my Adrian—you did not die!"

"Die? Of course not. I have just begun to live. Why do you talk like an imbecile?"

"This morning when we rapped at your door, you moaned so that we thought you were passing away. And you would not let us in. What was it?"

"That was you? I thought it was the

Copyright, 1924, by Karl W. Detzer.

landlady! And I was on the last act—do you understand me? The play is done!"

"You are a brave writer!" Caesar gripped his hands. "Madame, a drink! Charge it to Adrian."

"Have you a theater, a manager?" asked Benoit. He wore his hair heaped up, as tragic actors should, and, infrequently, did small parts in small houses in small provincial towns.

"You are an angel of misery, Benoit," Adrian retorted. "That will be simple. I need only present my comedy, and it is accepted."

"Ah, you are the most inexperienced of amateurs, my friend," cried Benoit, with his hand to his chest. "You are too hopeful. If your comedy is as good as you say it is, or half so good—if it has one good line! —it will beg from theater to theater, while the managers turn you away and give their pig-headed attention to stuff. It is the same with actors. You know my genius. You know how I can hold a house in my hand and drown it in its own tears. But here I am. For six months I have not spoken a line!"

"That is because you run to tragedy. If it were comedy—"

"Tragedy is the greater art." Benoit slid his feet under the table and rumpled his hair. "Any boy can do silly pranks. But tragedy—ah, that is art!"

"I have a friend on the *Journal*," volunteered Caesar, "who goes to all the first nights. Perhaps he—"

"He can do nothing," warned Benoit. "And if he is one of those low creatures who call themselves critics of the drama, he has a heart of lead and the tongue of a serpent—base creature!"

"Dinner," demanded Adrian. "Tomorrow is twelve hours away, and then I shall begin to peddle my wares. Tonight, dinner!"

SO THE following morning early Adrian arose at ten with the air of a martyr, and the comedy started on its rounds of the theaters. From office to office, from stage door to stage door, the author carried it in a bulging pocket. Up the Butte de Montmartre and down again he walked until his legs ached, and his heart.

The second morning and the third he went forth, and on the evening of that day an unkempt manager of an untidy theater in a ragged faubourg consented to read the piece. Adrian hurried to the Café of the Golden Lark, talkative with his success. And the next morning he went back to the theater.

"I will try it," said the manager, "and give you five francs a night while it runs."

Adrian smote his breast.

"Very well," said the manager, and handed back the bulky manuscript.

Adrian pushed it away.

"Five francs a night," repeated the manager dolefully. "Not that I consider it worth it, and it will break me probably to finance it. But I like to give beginners an opportunity."

So the comedy, which Adrian called "Mademoiselle Meddlesome," went into rehearsal.

THE manager, whose name was Harpag, who was shiny and insinuating, permitted Adrian to be present at the picking of the cast. And Adrian, after Benoit had rent his waistcoat and talked incoherently of the morgue, consented to take the tragedian along with him and introduce him to Monsieur Harpag.

"Remember," Adrian warned as they stood at the stage door, "this is a comedy. You may ask for the butler part—only the butler part. You are too serious for any other!"

Benoit promised.

In the corridor, on the dusty cork matting, there gathered that day, it seemed to Adrian, all the fat, faded, unpleasant women of Paris. A score of sallow men lounged in the background. Monsieur Harpag sat in the office, with his feet in the air, the manuscript in his lap, and a pencil behind his ear.

The women were permitted to enter first, one at a time, and the larger, more muscular of them seemed to have arrived ahead of their less fortunate sisters. They were a sorry lot, and Adrian frowned as they passed in dilapidated review. It was the eleventh woman—Adrian had counted—by all odds the ugliest, and by twenty pounds the fattest, that Harpag put down for the lead. Adrian gulped when he heard the manager tell her to return in the morning. She waddled out, after casting a sly grin at the playwright.

Adrian sickened as the other parts were

filled. He introduced Benoit, whose name forthwith was written on a slip of paper.

"Benoit," the manager said, looking at him with one eye shut. "Well, you'll do. Return at nine tomorrow."

"I shall be here also," Adrian announced when the last of the lounging players had been dismissed.

"What for?" asked Harpag.

"To assist at rehearsal," answered Adrian, who thought the explanation unnecessary.

"Not at all, my dear man," said Harpag. "Not at all—we need not bother you with that."

"It is no bother," insisted Adrian, "and I can be of immeasurable assistance."

"You would be of immeasurable bother and no assistance," corrected the manager.

"You mean—you insinuate that you could put on this comedy without me?" Adrian had not liked the manager from the first.

"Authors are permitted to attend the opening night, and bring their friends," explained Monsieur Harpag. "I shall see that you have enough tickets. But rehearsal? That would be disaster."

"I don't understand," Adrian gasped.

The manager blew out smoke.

"It's this way. The author interferes, and makes the actors so nervous that they forget their parts. You see, there always are changes to be made. No script is perfect, and the author so often goes to pieces when we overrule him."

"You wouldn't make any changes in my comedy! I insist! I will not permit one line to be added or dropped. 'Mademoiselle Meddlesome' is mine, and you dare not touch her!"

The manager smiled. "That's the way they all act. That's why I must enforce the rule."

"But who *is* there—who have you with enough judgment, enough understanding, to make a change?" Adrian paced the narrow office.

"I have changed better comedies than this, monsieur—"

ADRIAN departed with a slamming of doors. He hunted up Benoit, seeking a shoulder to weep upon. Benoit was unimpressed.

"That is all right," said the actor. "I have seen several sections in my own part I must change."

"You? In your part? The butler has nine words. What can you change in that?"

"My dear friend, do you think that I waste my genius on the part of the butler? No, no, no. I play the lead."

"The lead! You are too serious for the lead! You play the butler. I insist."

"Not at all, Adrian. I arranged that with Monsieur Harpag. Even the lead part is light, but I shall write in enough to suit it better to my art."

Adrian gasped. First Harpag, now Benoit! Perhaps every hussy in the show would change a line! It was terrible to think of. Adrian hurried away in search of Caesar.

Caesar went afroth with sympathy. Tears stood in his eyes; his voice trembled. But what could they do? Even Benoit was turned against them.

"When does it go on? When is the first night?" asked Caesar, after he had mastered his grief and tasted his *rhum chaud*.

"Two weeks from tonight." Adrian's voice was distant.

"I can do this for you, my dear Adrian," Caesar said. "At least I can strive for good press notices. My friend on the *Journal*, he will come, I am sure. I will tell him of your genius and your good heart. He will be interested."

Adrian spent the next day abed. A hundred times he pressed his hand to his brow in search of fever. Its absence disappointed him. He explored himself for pain. His mental state was ill, but his body refused to react to it. He thought of starvation, of the river, of throwing himself under express trains; he trembled violently as he composed his own epitaph.

THE following morning he was surprised to awaken; he had expected to pass in the night. Hunger sat upon him. Disconsolately he arose and dressed, looked at his tongue in the mirror, felt his own pulse. He was doomed to live. He went for a walk and in the late afternoon found himself in the neighborhood of the theater. Out of the stage door after rehearsal was passing the cast of his play, his "Mademoiselle Meddlesome," the comedy which he had written! He saw Benoit and decided not to speak.

But the actor hailed him. Adrian was goaded by curiosity, so he replied.

"How is it going?" he asked in a shaken voice.

"Pretty well. It is rough and painfully amateurish in spots, and needs a great deal of polishing. But we are getting it into shape."

Adrian's knees wavered. He fled.

But each afternoon he found himself drawn to the stage door. The actors seemed pleased with "Mademoiselle Meddlesome." Once Monsieur Harpag found him near the entrance and extended his hand. Adrian returned the greeting.

"It's doing very well," said Monsieur Harpag. "It will surprise you when you see it."

"That is what I fear."

"You will hardly recognize it," continued Monsieur Harpag, pleasantly.

Adrian muffled a murderous desire.

"Come in tomorrow morning. I'll let you have ten tickets for the first night," continued the manager. "You may have two box seats for yourself and a friend; the other eight I have scattered through the house. It pays to have friends sprinkled in the audience."

NEXT day Adrian returned to his lodgings with the tickets. Caesar would occupy the box with him. Another pair of the long pink streamers went to the dramatic critic on the *Journal*—Adrian had been for sending one, but Caesar insisted that two were necessary. Madame Montbazon, of the Golden Lark, curtsied heavily and promised to take her husband, who sat behind the stove when Adrian visited him and seemed unimpressed. Even the landlady smiled and assured the author that she would be present. Another pair of tickets went to the concierge and his wife. That left one.

"The little girl on the floor above," suggested Caesar.

"Bravo!" cried Adrian. "I shall send it with a sonnet. Get out. I must write the sonnet! Ah! To the lady in the window! Get out!"

The girl on the floor above had drooping lashes. Her eyelids were exquisite, and it is the lids and not the eyes that create beauty, Adrian had observed. Her lips! Her hair! The sonnet was completed. Adrian mounted to the floor above and presented her with sonnet and ticket, with a grave bow. The girl smiled and the world was good.

It was Caesar who suggested the coaching.

"They can see us, everybody to whom you give tickets. We will be in your box. And we can tell them that it will add to your success if they applaud and laugh at the proper times."

"Ah, you may not be the poet you pretend, but you are a genius of finance!" cried Adrian. "Go to our friends. It is more delicate if you go. Tell them what you have told me. Ask their assistance."

So Caesar hurried to the Café of the Golden Lark. He coached Madame Montbazon and Madame coached her husband.

"When you see us smile, you smile. When we smile more, you laugh. When we applaud, you stamp your feet and cheer!"

"*Bien*," nodded Madame Montbazon, and then to her husband: "You understand your orders?"

Caesar approached the concierge, who was not too quick of perception, and for a vociferous hour drilled him in his part. To the landlady it seemed deception, but she consented when Caesar explained that it meant financial success, and she remembered Adrian's overdue rent. At the doorway of the girl upstairs Caesar tarried until Adrian threw his shoe at the ceiling and stormed about the room.

The night of the opening! Benoit had remained at the theater. The little girl upstairs had arrived home with a large bundle, and she went out early, in a new hat with pink flowers upon it, and around it a band of drooping black silk to match her lashes. A nephew relieved the concierge; the landlady waddled through the court in the finery of forgotten ages.

Adrian rushed back to his lodgings after a last forage among his friends. It was collar buttons that time. An artist friend had furnished his suit, a waiter at the Golden Lark provided a fresh dicky. He had been ready to dress when he remembered the buttons. As he reached home with them, Caesar walked the floor, uncomfortable in starched linen. He smoked his cigarette awkwardly, with great concern.

"Come—you must help me!" Adrian fumbled among the new-pressed garments.

Caesar, cautious of his own finery, assisted gingerly. The clocks struck eight. It was three miles to the theater.

Adrian controlled his feet with difficulty the first mile; the second he skipped, ran by spurts, and urged Caesar to hurry. Caesar, because of his starch and his dignity, preferred to loiter.

"Why don't you lie down and rest?" Adrian asked savagely.

"Because then I would be as much of a spectacle as you are now," retorted Caesar. "You dance here on the public street. Be calm, at least, as a cyclone!"

"Your legs are lead," answered Adrian. "If it were a girl that you were going to see—"

"Of course," agreed Caesar. "That would be different."

AT THE end of the second mile, Adrian heard the clocks striking the quarter-hour—in fifteen minutes the curtain would rise, "Mademoiselle Meddlesome" would appear! He ran again. Caesar, fearful for his friend's sanity, leaped in pursuit. Two small boys joined the chase. A taxicab driver turned his machine and followed. Youths from the provinces, seeing the city for the first time, entered the game with spirit. Adrian darted straight ahead without looking at them. Caesar, forgetful of his linen, his newly polished boots, and his dignity, panted behind him, calling upon him to stop.

Men, women, boys, girls dropped their errands and fell into the procession. Two gendarmes heard the patter of feet and trotted out of a side street. They drew their swords and charged, but so intent was Adrian upon the rising curtain that he did not heed them until they had flung themselves upon him; one held his feet and the other sat on his head.

"Give the gentleman his watch," ordered the first gendarme.

"And his purse," directed the second, with a flourish of his sword.

Caesar caught up with the circle and pushed into it; whereupon the first gendarme asked him immediately:

"Where did he attack you?"

And the second queried:

"Was it a pistol or a knife?"

"It was a club," volunteered a woman who had joined the chase a hundred yards back.

"Ah!" said the first gendarme. "Oh!" said the second.

"He is my friend!" Caesar explained breathlessly.

"Then he is an ungrateful wretch," remarked a man in the crowd, "robbing his friend!"

"Yes, a tricky fellow—see his eyes," replied a woman.

Adrian rolled over upon his back and moaned.

"Release him," begged Caesar. "He is merely in a hurry. He is hurrying to the theater!"

"You're an accomplice, perhaps?" suggested one gendarme.

"Beyond a doubt," agreed the second, and at the same moment gripped Caesar's collar, the collar that was his pride.

The crowd thickened. Nowhere except in Paris can a crowd actually form. Elsewhere large collections of human beings gather, each individual retaining his own mind and holding his own tongue. But Paris is the crowd-city. There a mob loses its component parts. It hums with one tongue, it makes conjectures with one flighty mind, it is easily amused.

Adrian was trying to explain. Caesar talked. The crowd winked and grew witty. The gendarmes listened, courteously, the fatter one even getting off Adrian's head to give him better opportunity to plead.

"I am an author. My friend writes poems," Adrian whispered.

"You write!" The first gendarme understood.

"Surely we write — my play already has started in the theater around the corner."

The second gendarme tapped his head and nodded knowingly. The nearest members of the crowd tapped their heads. An author? Oh, well, what could one expect? Harmless, no doubt. The excited citizenry turned to other amusements; the gendarmes set their prisoners upon their feet and graciously brushed them off.

"Come, my brave Caesar! On, on, there is yet time!"

THE curtain had arisen. Adrian slipped into his seat in the box and Caesar followed him. A man stood upon the stage, talking to a woman. Adrian listened.

"There is something wrong," he

whispered to Caesar. "Are we in the right place? That is not my play!"

"Sh!" answered Caesar. "Not so loud. You must take the credit, no matter what happens."

"But it is not my play!"

"Yes—there is Benoit." Caesar pointed to the actor who had just strutted into the light, wearing a black cloak too large for him and a tall silk hat that he could not keep on his head.

"I have ridden my horse until it is white with foam," declaimed Benoit. "I am come to rescue you!"

"Oh!" gasped Adrian. "Oh!"

"What?" asked Caesar.

"That is not his entrance! You heard what he said—you saw how he walked in! He should have fallen down the chimney with a bunch of roses in his hand, and said: 'Mademoiselle, I have just dropped in on you!' Oh, it is terrible!"

Adrian groaned.

Some one in the pit groaned. Adrian looked into the darkened house. It was Madame Montbazon, who had taken his anguish for a cue. She was nudging her husband. The husband groaned self-consciously. Far across the theater in the darkness some one else groaned—no doubt the landlady.

Benoit was speaking again. Adrian looked back at the stage. It was one of the lines the actor had written in. Adrian bore it silently, waiting. This was the moment Mademoiselle Meddlesome should appear, with a flirt of her skirts, in a little run from the left.

The stage dimmed. A soft light seeped from the wings and flies. Then a ponderous creature in a black silk gown waddled out from the right. She cleared her throat and looked at Benoit.

"Come!" she said in a husky voice. "Now is our time to find their secrets. Come!"

"Oh!" wailed Adrian.

Six painful *Oh*'s arose from the pit as if to mimic him.

Adrian hid his face in his hands, not daring to look back at the stage. The audience laughed guardedly at times. Adrian heard two of his own lines repeated, followed by interminable sentences which he never had conceived. The first act was over. The lights flashed on.

"Come," begged Caesar. "Have a drink. I will buy it."

Adrian shook his head.

"It will brace you up," insisted Caesar.

"No! What does it matter? Tomorrow morning I shall kill myself!"

"Not till afternoon," suggested Caesar. "Wait and read what the *Journal* says. I cannot see the critic but I know that he is here."

The second act passed, somehow. Adrian heard a few more lines that he had written. Some of the funniest they had spared; but the audience sat stolid, silent. That first act! The changes had ruined the comedy. "Mademoiselle Meddlesome" was doomed to a short life. Adrian ground his teeth and stifled his desire to slay—Benoit, the manager, the leading lady. He thought of all the horrible ends to which he could put them.

The third act started slowly, with Mademoiselle Meddlesome looming in the center stage and Benoit striking attitudes at the left. Here was the funniest scene—in the original script. But the words uttered were not Adrian's, the business was not his. Adrian felt his heart leaking, his throat closing, his head bursting. Five minutes crept past, ten. The audience watched, silent. The comedy had failed.

Adrian wept.

Immediately from the pit escaped other sounds of weeping. Madame Montbazon cried violently; her husband sniffled. The landlady across the house testified sonorously to her grief. The little girl—the girl of the drooping lashes—cried prettily in the first gallery row. In the center aisle the concierge and his wife emitted melancholy noises.

"You must be still," said Caesar. "They think it is a cue!"

"Let me alone—I am in agony!"

Adrian rocked with his head in his hands. Madame Montbazon rocked, swaying her husband. The concierge rocked. The girl of the lashes appeared to be growing seasick.

NOISILY the house took the hint. Now there were other symbols of grief; handkerchiefs appeared, here, there, everywhere.

The sorrow of the audience confused the players. The leading lady forgot her lines as well as Adrian's. Benoit scowled, stamped and made repeated false starts.

Cues flashed from the wings. Some one else took up the weeping.

Adrian was overcome. Ruin! The portals of the morgue towered before him. Once more he looked at the stage through eyes dimmed with tears. Once more he gasped; once more he wept. Once more six true henchmen in the audience proclaimed their misery with him.

Now a woman in the second box dabbed her handkerchief to her eyes. A man in the balcony blew his nose. A strange girl cried dismally in the darkness at the rear.

Adrian wept more loudly.

His six good friends wept.

The audience wept.

The leading lady, having gone completely adrift, stood for a moment in agonizing silence, then sank down in the middle of the stage, and she wept also.

Even Benoit—Benoit, who spurned light parts, whose voice was oiled with tears, who played the better to an accompaniment of sobs, was too confused to carry on. Other cues were passed back and forth about him; his part and his assurance deserted him. Only one line ran through his head—the final line before the curtain in the tragedy which he had written years before, and which no manager would see.

Benoit found himself talking—he was reciting—declaiming the last line.

"And so"—he lifted his hand to his heart, and stood looking at the leading lady, who had swooned unconventionally in center-stage—"and so it ends, a ghastly sepulcher, so burns the candle low."

Monsieur Harpag staggered down to the stage door dangerously apoplectic. The audience sobbed and whimpered and cried, and the curtain fell.

Lights flashed on. Men and women arose in their seats and pounded their palms together; they lifted tear-stained faces to the curtain; they called out the actors by name. The curtain slid up, a gasping company bowed nervously.

"Author!" cried the audience. "Author!"

CAESAR nudged his friend, who had slumped into his chair, his chin relaxed. "They're calling you," he insisted.

"Author!" cried the audience. "Author!"

Caesar jerked the playwright to his feet and stood behind him, balancing him, pushing strength into his knees. Adrian's head drooped forward. That was enough, it was an acknowledgment: again and again the curtain arose, again and again. Adrian staggered to the side of his box and bowed weakly.

Caesar grasped his arm.

"Here's the critic," he said, and introduced his friend to the man from the *Journal.*

There was a buzz in Adrian's ears. When it ceased another person had entered the box.

"May I present Monsieur Bernberg?" the critic was saying. "Monsieur Adrian, Monsieur Bernberg is manager of the Théâtre Classique, on the Rue de Rivoli. He begs that you write a tragedy for him also."

"It is magnificent!" Monsieur Bernberg cried. "The greatest tragic drama in the history of Paris!"

"Tragic drama?" Adrian was bewildered. "'Mademoiselle Meddlesome' is a comedy! Are you all mad?"

"Comedy!" Monsieur Bernberg nudged the critic. "If that isn't like these young realists—doing superb tragedy and thinking it original to call their art comedy! But, Monsieur Adrian, tomorrow may I visit you? I want to commission you to write another tragedy for me."

"But my play is not a tragedy!" Adrian insisted.

"Tut, tut!" said Monsieur Bernberg.

ADRIAN hesitated. What was it? Tragedy or comedy? He rubbed his forehead and looked confusedly at Caesar. Then a figure moved through the circle of admirers. It was the girl from upstairs, the girl of the lashes, the lips, the eyes. She rushed toward Adrian.

"Ah, monsieur, it was charming! I cried as you directed, but it was difficult. It was so funny!"

Adrian's knees found strength.

"You?" he cried. "You saw it was comedy? You have eyes! And oh, mademoiselle, appreciation! This talk of tragedy! Oh, mademoiselle, you have a brain, you!"

Adrian seized the girl's hands and kissed both of her pink cheeks, once, twice, six times.

"Come!" he cried, and felt the five-franc note in his pocket. "Let us hurry to the nearest café! Let us leave these imbeciles! I feel another sonnet running through my bones. I shall call it—let me see—ah, yes! 'To a Lady of Understanding!'"

Apartment 4D

An Intimate Page of New York Life That the Police Missed. A Story with Real Shivers

By Elsa Barker

Illustration by J. Scott Williams

AS GEORGE GRAHAM often told himself, if it had not been for his long experience in the Orient—his many grim encounters with strange men and stranger women—that August evening he spent in the Bennington Apartments might have ended very differently.

It began prosaically enough, with his impulse to stop in the drug store on Madison Avenue and telephone his sister Jane at the Ritz. Jane had come to New York to hunt in the antique shops for a special kind of teak-wood cabinet, and he feared she might be taken in. Her confidence in all humanity was very beautiful, of course, but sometimes she was lacking in judgment.

It was stuffy in the telephone booth, and he left the door open.

"Is this the Ritz? . . . Can I speak to Mrs. Wheeler, of Louisville? . . . Oh, hello, Jane! . . . Yes, I called you up to say that if you need my advice in that matter of the Chinese wood, just telephone. . . . Don't forget the number—Madison Square 4126. . . . Yes. . . . All right, sis. Call me if you need me."

As he came out of the booth he found himself face to face with a tall, distinguished-looking girl in a sage-green dress and hat. She was so close that he drew back suddenly, to avoid touching her.

"I beg your pardon." He lifted his hat.

She smiled at him—a strange, half-amused little smile; then she turned and went over to the counter, where he heard her asking the clerk for a powder-puff.

"What a pretty woman," he thought, "—or girl, for she can't be more than twenty-five! Wonder why she smiled at me—like that."

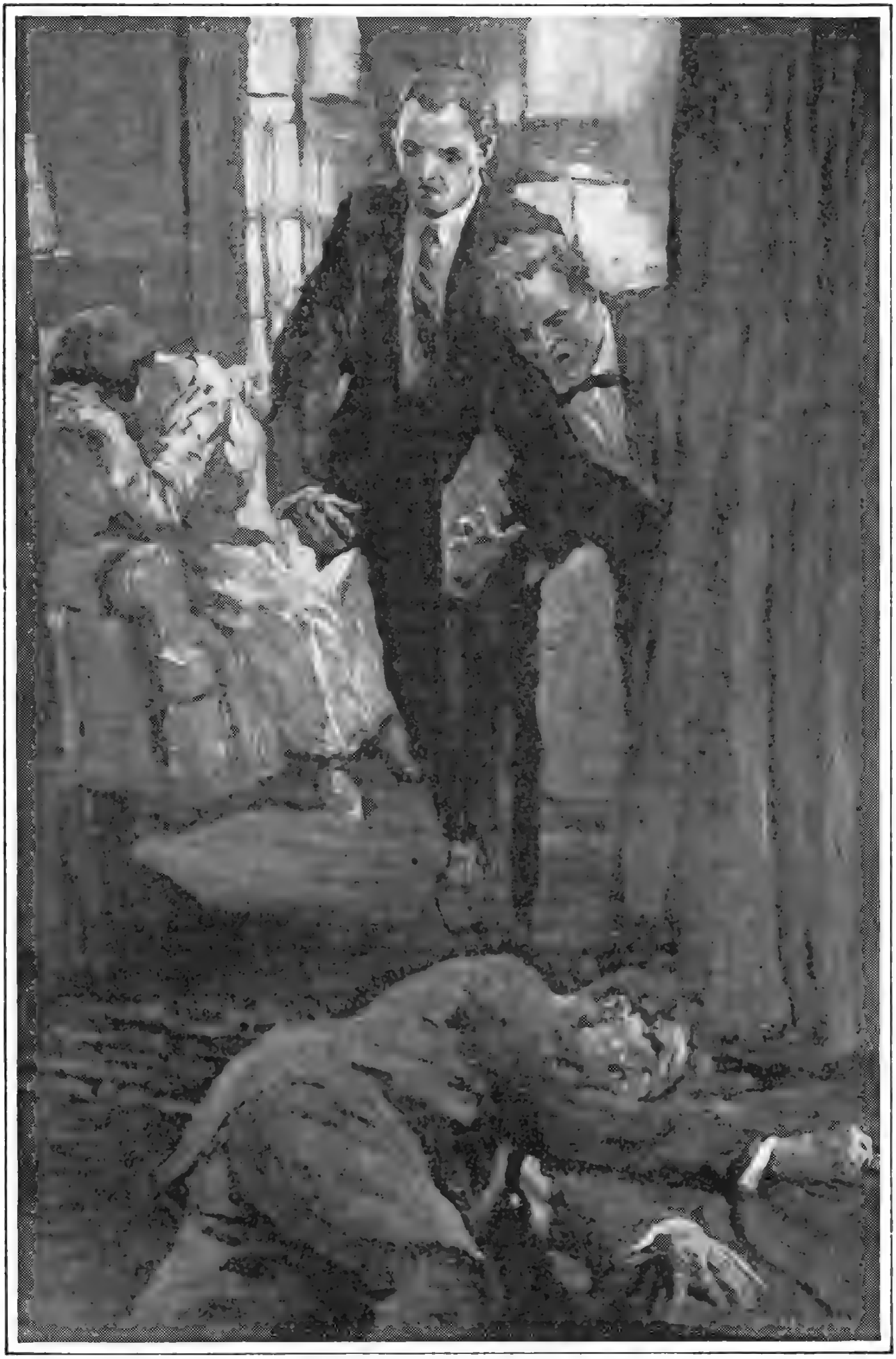
Strolling back to his bachelor rooms he heard the clock on the Metropolitan Tower striking nine. He would have a quiet evening beside the lamp, with that new book on the oil supply of Asia. For Graham had discovered, ten years ago, a working compromise between his two supreme desires—that of traveling in far countries, and that of making money. An engineer, representing one of the world's great oil companies in the far East, he had also found time and opportunity for many alluring side-issues; and though he made no pretense of knowing much of anything outside his specialty, he was, at thirty-five, remarkably expert in the judgment of many things—including men. About women he was still romantic, and not so sure.

As he settled himself in the easy-chair beside the reading-lamp, stretching out his long legs, he thought of that girl in the drug store.

Girls!

Some day, perhaps, he would marry and settle down; but he could not ask any luxury-spoiled daughter of civilization to share his present nomad life, its hardships, often its dangers. In another five years he would have made his little pile, and then he could think seriously about girls.

Before attacking his oil book he glanced at the evening paper. There was the usual array of sensational happenings, foreign and domestic, and on one of the middle pages a half-column headed and subheaded:



"Cruikshank! How dare he come back here!" Braddock drew the curtains apart with a pull that made the wooden rings rattle. He gave one look.

"Cruikshank the Absconder. False Clue Abandoned. Not in Trinidad."

Graham had spent a winter in Trinidad, and he read with some amusement of the reported quest down there. The sensation of Cruikshank was already six weeks old and had lost its original place on the front pages of the daily press. The reporter outlined a theory that the missing man might be headed for the South Sea Islands.

Graham's reading was interrupted by the ringing of the telephone, beside him on the table.

"Hello! This is Madison Square 4126. . . . Yes, I'm Jane Wheeler's brother. . . . What's that? . . . I know the Bennington apartment house—know where it is. . . . You want me to come there, to Apartment 4 D? . . . Very well, but hadn't you better tell me . . . Oh, if you say so. . . . All right."

He hung up the receiver.

"Strange!" he said aloud. "Why—that's very strange!"

Who *was* the woman? She had mentioned his sister Jane. The voice was queer—frightened. Had anything happened to Jane?

He leaped to his feet, snatched up his hat and started for the door.

THE Bennington apartment house, near Madison Avenue, had one liveried attendant who ran the elevator; but as Graham went into the building there was not a soul in sight.

"Apartment 4 D," he thought; "that must be on the fourth floor. But—why, the woman forgot to tell me her name!"

He could see by the elevator cables that the car was slowly coming down. It stopped, and a black man opened the door. Graham entered the car.

"4 D," he said casually, as if he came there every day.

"Ain't nobody up there, suh, but—but the lady."

"Yes, she's expecting me."

The car started slowly upward.

"Mr. Braddock, he done gone out, suh—half an hour ago."

"Yes, I know," said Graham, who was used to dealing with the primitive mind.

"Maybe you're the gemmun that telephoned."

"When was that—the telephone?" Graham had his wits about him.

"Oh, 'bout half-pas' eight, I guess. I said Mr. Braddock gone to Tarrytown, 'fore dinner. But he done come back since."

"All right," said Graham, satisfied with having learned at least the name, and that he was about to visit a lady alone.

Arrived at the fourth floor, he rang the bell of Apartment D, directly in front of the elevator.

There was a hurried step within, the door opened, and he stood face to face with that girl in the green dress. But now she wore no hat, and her face was paler than when he had seen her in the drug store.

"Won't you come in?" Her voice was low.

He went in, and she closed the door behind him.

They were at one end of a narrow hall.

He followed her through a doorway to the left of the entrance, and found himself in a handsome sitting-room—obviously a man's room, with carved chairs upholstered in brown leather, tables and cabinets in old English oak, and a smoker's stand with brier-wood pipes.

Graham stood politely, his hat in his hand.

"You mentioned my sister?"

She motioned him to one of the leather chairs, beside a table, and sank down in another chair facing him.

"Please sit down," she said. "Yes, Jane and I were at school together—the Norwood School."

He sat down. Jane had really been at the Norwood School.

"Is my sister here?" he asked, with his eyes on the girl's face.

"Oh, no! She isn't here."

"And you haven't seen her this evening?"

"No."

Graham relaxed then. Jane being in no danger, he could follow the development of this adventure with a free mind.

He glanced round the room, which was divided from an inner room by heavy curtains of brown velvet. On the yellow carpet were scattered a few oriental rugs. Yes, everything here was in good taste.

He was silent, half smiling, giving the girl time to explain the object of his visit.

How handsome she was! But there was something strange in her brown eyes. Graham had seen the look of terror—and restrained terror—too many times not to recognize it now. No, this wasn't any cheap adventure. Whatever else it was, it wasn't that.

"I'm glad"—he felt his way through the fog of her motives in calling him—"I'm glad to know you, anyway."

But as she sat there looking at him, he realized that her mind was not really busy with him at all, but with something else—something she might be going to tell him, or might not.

Then he saw her start, and she seemed to be trying to pull herself together.

"I didn't know Jane was in town," she said, "till I overheard you telephoning her in the drug store."

"Oh! You remembered the number I gave her?"

"Yes, Mr. Graham."

So she knew his name, though she had not yet told him hers.

He saw the color rush into her face, suddenly.

"I don't know how to explain—" She stopped, with a pathetic little gesture of her hands.

"Then don't explain," he said, "unless you want to." He was trying to help her out, whoever she was. "Perhaps you were lonesome, and wanted some one to talk to. I've been just that lonesome myself, more than once in my life."

"In the East, you mean?"

He nodded. Then she did know something tangible about him.

"MY BROTHER—" she began hurriedly. "I met him in the hall downstairs, as I came in—after a late dinner—right after I saw you in the drug store. He was just going out again—said he wouldn't be back till eleven o'clock. I don't live here, you know. I live in Philadelphia. I'm just visiting my brother for a week or two."

Yes, it was still rather bizarre, but less foggy than a moment ago. And, somehow, it was easier now to speak about Jane.

"I'm ten years older than my sister," he said, "and I've been out of the country so much—she may have mentioned you, Miss Braddock, but I don't remember."

She did not even seem to know that she had not told him her name. She was indeed preoccupied. And there was something—yes, something uneasy in the very atmosphere of that room. The man who has lived in tents develops a sixth sense.

How the sage-green of that dress brought out the bronze lights in her hair! One of her hands was unconsciously gripping the carved lion's head on the arm of the chair—gripping it so tightly that the knuckles were white. The long fingers of the other hand lay softly in her lap. Yes, the two sides of her mind must be so divided now—one tense with repressed emotion, the other yielding to the need of the social graces.

And she was smiling—or trying to smile.

"I heard you say to your sister, 'Call me if you need me.' "

There was something so appealing in the way she said it that Graham's heart went out to her, but he could not think of any appropriate answer.

To cover his embarrassment, and hers, with a murmured "May I?" he rose and went over to a small landscape in watercolor that was hanging on the wall to the right of her chair, over the upright piano.

"How very interesting!" he said stupidly. "Do you know who painted it?"

"I did it myself." She half turned. "It's nothing. Tom liked it, so I gave it to him. It's on the hill near Fiesole. Do you know Fiesole?"

"Yes, I know it very well—stayed near Florence one time with a friend who had a villa—when I was young, before I first went to Persia."

He turned away from the picture and went back to his chair. He could not understand it, but he was beginning to be absurdly nervous. At eleven o'clock, she had said, her brother would come back, and it couldn't be later than a quarter to ten now. Once in Bombay, years ago, when his own life was at stake, he had made himself so entertaining to a strange native girl that he had half forgotten in the sheer game of it the danger that threatened him. Yes, he must think of something interesting to say to Miss Braddock.

Suddenly the doorbell rang.

Something was happening to that girl in the chair. He thought she was going to scream, she looked so wild.

But after a moment she rose quietly, excused herself, and went to open the door.

He heard a woman's voice saying:

"I'm late, Miss Braddock. I'm so sorry."

"It doesn't matter. Will you bring it down to my room?" Her voice was calm—too calm.

Graham heard their double footsteps going down the hall, then the murmur of the women's voices in a room at the other end of the apartment. He caught a few words of the coarser voice:

"I think you'll find it quite all right now. . . . I lengthened the sleeve, as you see. . . . Yes, that line of gold round the neck will be very becoming. . . . You don't want to try it on, then?"

A dressmaker, of course. A new gown. Graham smiled softly to himself, forgetting the tension of the moment before. And he thought of the powder-puff which the girl had asked for in the drug store, The eternal feminine! Some day for him, as for other men, there would be a home and a woman. He could fancy himself sitting here, a husband, with a wife in that room down there—interviewing a dressmaker, making herself lovely for his sake.

An apartment like this one, maybe.

HE GLANCED around, wondering if that inner room behind the portières was a library.

Why! What was that on the yellow carpet, just at the edge of one of the heavy brown folds of the curtain? It looked like wet blood.

Noiselessly he rose and went over there. He bent. Yes, there could be no doubt about it.

With a snap like that of a released spring, he straightened himself.

The woman-talk was still going on at the end of the hall.

On a level with his eyes, Graham parted those curtains a fraction of an inch. Yes, the room in there was lighted.

Then with both hands he made a larger opening and thrust his head through.

He was panting as he drew back, letting the curtains fall into place.

A dead man was lying in there on the floor. There was much blood.

His first lightning-like thought was to get out of the place—quick. But no—that was a coward's impulse, he told himself, also a fool's impulse. It was just instinct, without mind.

He was conscious of staggering a little as he turned back to his chair by the table. But before sitting down he turned again with a sudden thought, went over and drew a fold of the long curtain over that red spot on the carpet.

He was seated in his place again, and had picked up a book from the table, when he heard the women coming along the hall. There was a moment's colloquy at the door, "Good night, Miss Braddock," "Good night," then the latch clicked as the door was reclosed.

But instead of coming into the sitting-room where he waited for her, Miss Braddock went down the hall again. That was curious, he thought.

Quickly he glanced at his watch. Ten o'clock. Then he heard the prelude of bells from the Tower clock. Was there going to be another hour of this? Impossible! The girl would break.

He glanced over his shoulder, wondering why she did not come back.

Graham had been at close quarters with murder more than once, but never had watched beside it with an implicated girl for company.

Though his heart was pounding, he could think of nothing sensible to do but remain there quietly, and await developments. To raise an alarm would be very unwise. To tell the girl what he knew would be still more unwise. But what was she doing now, at the other end of the apartment? Was there another exit from the place? Suppose she just went away, leaving him there. . . .

Then he heard a light step, and she came into the room again, with a letter in her hand.

Automatically Graham rose.

"From Jane," she was saying, and she held the letter out to him. "I was looking for it; it was in my traveling-bag."

It came as a shock now—Jane's name. In the agitation of the last three minutes he had forgotten her. He took the letter.

It was written from Louisville, a week before, and the writing was unmistakably hers:

Dear Marion:

Yes, we want you to come down to Louisville the middle of October, and be our first guest—for a fortnight—in the new house. We are going to make it as perfect as we can, that house, and you will love it.

I shall feel like a schoolgirl again—being with you, after five years.

In the meantime, if you should be going to New York to visit your brother, do let me know and I'll ask my brother George to call on you. He is tied in New York by some business for his old oil company, or he would be down here with us now.

With love, always the same,
JANE WHEELER.

As he glanced up, her eyes were upon him.

He felt an impulsive desire to help her—whatever her story might be; and it seemed to him that he could help her best by distracting her mind till the brother's return. Wasn't that why she had called him—that and the fear of being left alone with the thing in the next room?

So, though his hands were prickling with excitement, Graham began to tell her stories about his life in the far East—stories of the oil quest, other stories of adventure, of courage, of men and women.

After talking for ten minutes or so about India, he told her of an experience of his with an English girl out there. Caught in a rowboat in a sudden squall, when one of their oars broke in two and drowning seemed probable, the girl had only said to him dryly, "And my hair must be all out of curl from the rain!"

He saw Miss Braddock's head go up—yes, that was the effect he wanted.

"We came through all right," he said. "I've noticed that people generally do, if they don't get in a panic.

"The girl felt it was her fault, too," Graham went on, "for she had asked me to take her out on the lake. But she knew I wasn't blaming her. Men don't blame girls, I suppose," he smiled. "We just try to help them out, when they get themselves and us in a tight place."

Her eyes were almost tender now as she watched him.

Yes, if he could make her sure of him, it would lessen her apprehension. And by and by—for of course he would stay until her brother came, and then try to help her further, if he could . . .

"I SHOULD like to go to the East," she said suddenly. "If I were a man—"

"Oh," he laughed, "there are lots of women out there!"

She caught her breath. "I've had enough of civilization—for the present."

He would have given his best oil well to know what was really in her mind.

"Civilization seems pretty good to me just now," he said, "—for a change, I mean. But I understand those fellows who want to be shipped somewhere east of Suez. I suppose I'll be glad to be going back myself, in another six weeks."

"You're not going, then—right away?"

"Not unless my plans are changed. One never knows, in the business I'm in. I go where I'm sent—unless there's a stronger reason for going somewhere else."

She was listening so intently! Yes. Whatever was she thinking of?

"Does one have to have a passport, to travel in Asia?" she asked. "Could one start off—tonight, I mean—and just go there?"

He was so surprised by the question that he forgot to answer it.

"Asia is a wide place," he said.

"Yes, of course—a wide place."

"But you know," he added, "there are more people in the city of New York than in the whole of some eastern countries. So I suppose more things happen here every day, and some of the most thrilling of them we never hear about."

"Yes, Mr. Graham. But tell me more about Asia."

So he resumed his narratives of that "somewhere east of Suez, where the best is like the worst, where there aren't no Ten Commandments."

And as he talked he heard the Tower clock sounding half-past ten.

She heard it, too, for she sat forward suddenly—listening.

He did not give her time to think, hurrying on with his rambling recital, piling incident on incident, scene on scene, drawing character sketches with a few swift strokes of his wit.

But at the climax of one story he mentioned without thinking a good fellow, a friend of his, who had shot a man dead. Then he stopped short, appalled by his heedlessness.

"I forgot." He covered the hesitation. "I forgot one shouldn't tell violent stories to a girl."

But she was leaning toward him, her brown eyes wide.

"Then surely you think"—her voice was vibrant—"you think murder is sometimes justified?"

It staggered him, for a moment.

"Why," he said, "even the law admits defenses for killing."

"But, Mr. Graham—oh, I mean there are things the law doesn't admit. Suppose a man has robbed you of your property! Suppose a man has lied to you, deceived you, and robbed you of your property!"

"I—I don't know." He lowered his eyes before hers, that were too brilliant with excitement held in leash.

Was she going to tell him—to confess—now—without waiting for her brother?

"Why," he said, "if one kills a man in sudden anger, without premeditation, then sometimes—"

"IN SUDDEN anger," she was whispering, "without premeditation—yes."

He looked at the delicate hands nervously clasping and unclasping themselves in her lap. Yes, he could imagine those hands at the piano, imagine them painting landscapes at Fiesole, doing needlework, maybe; but not— A cold chill ran up and down his spine.

"May I smoke?" he asked suddenly, looking up at her face.

"Of course."

As he drew out his cigarette case, she brought an ash-tray and placed it on the table at his elbow.

With the first breath of the fragrant smoke, and in the release of tension that tobacco brings, he became once more—externally, at least—the self-possessed evening caller, and remembered that he was paying a first visit. He must not seem to remain too long.

"I hope," he said, "that I may have the pleasure of meeting your brother some evening."

"Oh!" A startled look came into her eyes. "Please don't go—not until after eleven, anyway."

"You're very kind, Miss Braddock. Of course I shall be glad to remain until your brother comes."

"I—I don't like staying alone," she was saying bravely. "It's not that I'm generally timid, but—oh, I had to dine alone this evening, too, in a restaurant. Tom had some business up in Westchester County; he went up there with the car."

"Of course I understand, Miss Braddock."

"And you know," she went on hurriedly, "there's hardly anybody in the house—nobody at all on this floor but us. The families are away—the apartments closed for the summer. I hope you don't think I'm a silly, nervous woman."

"Indeed I don't, and I'm very glad you telephoned me."

His interest in her was already stronger than any fear of personal embarrassment.

Yes, he must help her, and in the way she wanted to be helped. But he could not think of any more stories to tell her; the fine verve of his original effort was evaporated now—scattered by her admission of a personal motive for violence.

As he glanced round the room, his eyes fell on the upright piano.

"Of course you play," he said.

"Yes—yes, I do."

She rose and went to the piano—eagerly, it seemed to him, and her hands swept over the keys. Her touch was sure, and the very nervous tension of the moment gave something to her music which thrilled Graham.

She began to play Mozart. He realized that she was playing very well, and he marveled at her, in the circumstances. What a woman—rising valiantly to the heights of Art in such an hour!

Yes, whatever she had done was unpremeditated; surely it was unpremeditated.

He watched her fine profile and the lines of her arms and shoulders while she played; the sage-green of her gown against the dark wood of the piano, the bronze lights in her soft hair. And as he watched, there swept over him a very human and masculine desire to take her in his arms and comfort her—to shelter her against the gathering storm. A sudden wildness seized him.

WHAT had she meant by asking if one must have a passport to go to Asia? Did she really want to go to Asia?

Suppose her brother should not come back, after all! That possibility was startling—it had not occurred to him before. No, of course he was not following the music. If the brother should not come, what was he going to do with this beautiful girl? To leave her alone here would be unthinkable. For some strange reason of her own she had chosen him in her hour of need, after that quick first glance in the drug store.

He drew a deep breath. Yes, if the brother was not here by half-past eleven, he would tell her what he knew—what he had seen—and ask her to confide in him.

His heart began to beat very fast. Already he was speculating in unknown values.

Then, with a start, he realized that she had stopped playing. He rose and went over to her, leaning his elbow on the top of the high piano.

She looked up at him—smiled.

A shiver went through him.

"Shall I sing to you?" she asked.

He just nodded—wondering that she could control her voice enough to sing.

It was a strange choice she made, that passionate, despairing music written around the Indian love lyric of Laurence Hope, "Less than the Dust."

To the pleading tones of her rich contralto his nerves responded like a wind-harp to the wind.

Less than the dust, beneath thy Chariot wheel,
Less than the rust, that never stained thy Sword,
Less than the trust thou hast in me, O Lord,
Even less than these!

And as she sang her eyes sought his and clung to them. The excitement of imminent danger thrilling through her voice awoke in him a response almost delirious, for the call was to something deeper, older, more fundamental than reason. Yes, she had chosen him, after one glance. . . .

Less than the weed, that grows beside thy door,
Less than the speed of hours spent far from thee,
Less than the need thou hast in life of me,
Even less am I.

As he stood there looking down at her—it was overpowering, almost unendurable, that humble, womanly, despairing cry. And he felt that whoever she was—whatever she might have done in a moment of madness—he was linked with her now by that strange Power the Orient believes in, that Power which in our colder language we call Fate, and he would not break the tie if he could. His feeling for her grew more rapidly than the yogi's mango-seed, that sprouts, becomes a tree, and blossoms, in an hour. If she had asked him then to take her away to Asia—Asia the deep, the mysterious, Asia of love and violence and death, older than good and evil—he could have gone forth with her and without a backward glance.

The elemental madness was upon him and he welcomed it—that moment of all his life when he was freest as an individual from all the trammels of the tribes of men.

Since I, O Lord, am nothing unto thee,
See here thy sword, I make it keen and bright,
Love's last reward, Death, comes to me tonight,
Farewell, Zahir-u-din.

As the last tones of the song drew the blood from his heart, the girl was singing with her eyes closed. Then—

SLOWLY the bells of the Tower clock began their solemn prelude to the eleven deep strokes of the hour.

At the eleventh stroke she rose from the piano stool.

She turned away from Graham—he was standing like a man in a dream—and she went to the middle of the room, remained there, facing the brown curtains.

"If he shouldn't"—she seemed to be talking to herself—"if he shouldn't come back—"

Graham was beside her in a second, his hand almost—not quite—touching her arm.

"Do you want me to take you away?" he was whispering.

"Take me away?" Her eyes were startled.

"Yes. You're afraid of something."

She just stood there, gazing at him. Then he saw a shiver run over her.

"You know that I'm—afraid?"

"Yes!"

"He might be a little late," she murmured; "he is sometimes—sometimes a little later than the hour he says."

"But, dear girl"—he came closer, took her hand—"I'm not going to leave you alone; you know I'm not going to leave you alone. And by and by, when he comes back, you'll have us with you—both of us."

Her lips moved, and he caught the line of the Indian song she was repeating, under her breath:

" 'Since I, O Lord, am nothing unto thee—' "

He raised her hand—it was ice-cold—and pressed it against his lips. He was trembling from head to feet.

The emotion of the music had broken down her long restraint—that, and the arrival of the hour. Terror was upon her—and yet she was so still.

"You know," he whispered, "you know I will do anything in the world I can to help you, now—always."

She looked up at him, bewildered.

"But—I don't understand—"

"Don't try to understand—only be sure of me."

"You know, then; you know that something—something—"

He just nodded, slowly.

"You—you've seen—"

"I've seen that you were desperately troubled—from the first—ever since I came."

Her eyes wandered. "If he isn't here in a little while—"

"Then if there's anything you want to tell me—anything you need to tell me—I'm quite ready to hear it."

A strange look had come into her face.

"How—how wonderful you are!" she breathed, as she drew away the hand he was holding.

He said nothing—gazing at her.

"But it's—it's far more terrible than you think, Mr. Graham. I—I don't know how to tell you—"

They were startled by the rattling of a key in the lock of the outer door.

"Oh!" She swayed a little. "He's come back. He's come back!"

From where he stood Graham saw a heavy-set man in gray clothes come into the hall and close the door behind him, saw him take off his hat and toss it on the rack.

Turning, he came into the sitting-room—saw Graham—stopped short in surprise. He had a pleasant, blond, beardless face, quite boyish-looking.

Graham glanced at Marion, who was gazing at her brother with great questioning eyes. She was quite motionless, save for the quick rise and fall of her breath.

As she did not speak, the brother looked from her to Graham, and his gray eyes were puzzled.

"TOM!" Her voice trembled a little, and she made a wavering motion with her hand. "This is Mr. Graham—Jane Wheeler's brother."

"Oh!"

The puzzled look had left the brother's face now, and he held out his hand with a genial smile.

"I'm so glad you came in this evening, Mr. Graham, to keep my sister company. We only learned a few days ago—Mrs. Wheeler wrote my sister—that you were in America."

"Yes. Jane wanted me to call—I know." He was trying to speak naturally.

"I meant to look you up myself, in a few days," Tom Braddock said; "but we've been just lately—my sister and I—in a lot of perplexing business—"

"Perplexing business?" Graham's echo of the words was quite involuntary.

"Yes, that Cruikshank matter, you know."

"Cruikshank?" The name was familiar to Graham, but for the moment he had forgotten its connotation.

"Yes," Braddock said, "the man who ran away—you remember, six weeks ago."

"The absconder? Yes, of course. I hope you weren't—"

"But we were. He robbed us of about half our fortune. I wouldn't believe it at first—thought I knew him so well! I even took him in here for a few days, toward the end."

Graham felt suddenly dizzy. Miss Braddock's words a little while ago—about defenses for killing: "Suppose a man has lied to you, deceived you, and robbed you of your property!" That half-column in the evening paper: not in Trinidad. . . .

He was staring at Braddock.

But the man's manner, everything about him—so natural, almost casual—oh, it was utterly impossible to think he knew anything about the tragedy in the next room! While the girl . . .

Something in Graham's face must have troubled Braddock, for he looked away—saw the drawn curtains.

"But, Marion, why have you shut off the library?"

He went toward the portières, put out his hand.

"Tom! *Tom!*" She was beside him, gripping his arm, her whole being tense with excitement. "Don't—don't go in there!"

"But—why, my dear girl!" He was patting her arm, soothing her. "I never saw you like this before."

And he turned to Graham, who stood helplessly by. "Do you know—has anything happened?"

Marion gasped, "He's in there—in the library!"

"He? But who?"

She could only whisper it. "Cruikshank!"

"Cruikshank!" Braddock repeated, his face flushing angrily. "How dare he come back here!" And breaking away from his sister, he drew the curtains apart with a pull at the cord which made the wooden rings rattle.

He gave one look. . . .

"My God!"

With a little moaning cry Marion sank down in a chair and covered her face with her hands.

Graham was beside Tom Braddock in an instant, his arm round the man's shoulders.

"But, Marion! Marion! He's been shot —or—"

"Yes, yes, Tom!" The girl's voice was smothered.

The two men just looked at each other. It was a moment which made them comrades for life.

Then Graham muttered, through his chattering teeth, "I'm with you—with both of you—whatever happens."

They went into the library, past that other man on the floor.

And they saw on the center-table the black hair and other accessories of a crude disguise, a leather wallet, a latch-key.

"Marion!" the brother cried. "Did he come in here—with that latch-key he carried off? Marion!"

"I don't know—I don't know. I found him there—when I came in."

"You found him?" The brother's tone was horror-stricken.

He staggered back to his sister in the outer room.

"But who shot him? Who shot him?"

"I don't know. I thought—" She raised her haggard face. "Oh, I couldn't understand your letting me come in here!"

"He was there, then—lying there—dead?"

"Yes, when I came in after dinner—right after I met you in the hall downstairs—met you going out from here."

There was utter silence in the room, for several heartbeats.

From his place in the inner room Graham could see Tom Braddock's face. It was something he never forgot.

"My poor little girl!" the brother was whispering. "My poor little girl! Of course you thought I had done it. And you stayed here—you drew the curtains and stayed here—waiting for me to come home, or—or *not* come!"

"Yes, Tom."

She was looking up at him, appealingly.

"There—there wasn't anything else to do—was there?"

He leaned over her, stroking her hair, his lips trembling.

Then—moving unsteadily—he came back into the library where Graham was, but keeping his eyes away from that form on the floor.

"We must look," he said huskily; "we must look."

He passed his hand over his forehead. "Yes. . . . I drove down from Tarrytown, ran in here a moment to leave my motor-cap, to get a hat. I didn't come into this room at all."

"Cruikshank may have telephoned," Graham said quietly. "He must have made sure you were out—then just walked up the stairs."

It was Graham who looked for the revolver, which was half concealed where it had fallen by the long folds of the table-cover; but the two men could see the initials in silver on the handle—L. C.

"L. C.," Braddock muttered. "Leonard Cruikshank. So he—he paid the price himself."

As they passed out of the library, Graham drew the heavy brown curtains together again—concealing everything.

"Will you stay with my sister," Braddock said under his breath, "while I go down to the police station?"

ALONE with Marion again, Graham just stood there, looking down at her.

And it seemed to him that the passion which had grown in his heart while listening to her tragic singing was only a promise of the greater love, reverent with wonder, which held him now.

"It was what I heard you tell Jane over the telephone," she said. " 'Call me if you need me.' It kept echoing in my mind."

"Yes, yes, my dear, my dear!"

He could hardly control his voice.

"For ten years I have carried a dream in my heart—out there in Asia—alone. . . . My God, how you can stand by a man! . . . Do you think—do you think you could get to know me well enough—in six weeks, I mean—"

"But, Mr. Graham"—her eyes were luminous—"I think—I think I've come to know you—very well—this evening."

Did Eve Murder Angus Duncan

The Devonshers

Trying to Cut Out from Antelope Basin Rankling Hatred and Injustice, Judge Jones Finds the Knife Turned Against Himself

By Honoré Willsie Morrow

Illustrations by Ernest Fuhr

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

IT WAS the trial of Eve Devonsher for the murder of Angus Duncan, and all Antelope Basin was in the courtroom to hear the proceedings.

Except for Eve and her widowed mother, the Devonshers were all gone—a proud family that had done much for its community and was known throughout the state of Wyoming. From the time of Eve's grandfather, Carter, the family had been under a cloud. When Carter was deposed as governor of the Oregon country for the Hudson's Bay Company, he had threatened to stir the United States out of its dormancy on the Oregon question. The United States awoke and successfully pressed its claim to half of the Oregon country. Thereupon, the new governor, Sir John Colbaith, followed Carter, fought a duel with him and forced him to sign a confession of treachery to England. A copy of this confession and other papers were taken by Carter's secretary, Duncan, and were used down to the death of his grandson Angus for extorting blackmail from the Devonshers.

To make matters worse, Eve's father Dave, who had made himself a leading rancher and breeder of horses, died after being chased and shot as a horse thief. The young girl, Eve, resented the charge on her father's account and her own, with all the fierce temper of the Devonshers; but it was not until she was grown that this torment began to pass.

During the World War Major Peter Colbaith of the British Army came to Antelope Basin to buy horses of the fine Devonsher-Arabian breed for the Allies. Eve was the only person in the community who realized the importance of the Allies' success, and when the major found himself up against what seemed extortionate prices she went out with him to persuade ranchers to be reasonable; but in vain. It only led to quarrels—one of the worst of these with Angus Duncan. When, about this time, America entered the war, and Howard Freeman, her fiancé, refused to enlist, selfishly pleading disability, she broke the engagement and started for France.

Soon after, Angus Duncan was found shot dead in his branding corral and his horses were missing. His widow Minnie, daughter of Sheriff Brownell, could name only one enemy—Eve Devonsher, who had just had the last of a series of quarrels with him. And when Sid Brownell found her camping in a place that she frequented when she was distressed, Judge Jones promptly brought her to trial. The witnesses in this remarkable trial were encouraged by the judge to tell everything that would throw light on the Devonshers and their relations with the community; this despite frequent protests from Colonel

Johnson for the state and Jim Poindexter for the defense.

Old Tom Maine, a contemporary of Carter and Sir John, was the principal witness for the past. Another interesting development was that Peter Colbaith, grandson of Sir John, was giving Eve the steadiest encouragement to hold her ground in what seemed to be a losing battle.

Mary Devonsher came to the stand. She told of a conversation with old Carter soon after Eve's birth.

"Mary," he said, "bring this child up with the idea that she must make restitution for all that we've failed to do. Teach her to give our self-respect back to us. . . . When this child is grown, I want you to tell her that a certain Sir John Colbaith wrecked our family. Tell her I want her to go to England and see to it that the truth is told in the proper quarters. . . . I shall tell you the story as soon as I gather myself together."

But Carter died a month after without carrying out his intention. After his son Dave's death Mrs. Brownell, one of the worst of Mrs. Devonsher's persecutors, came to torment her further. Mary said at the trial:

"I ordered her off the place but for a moment she didn't stir. 'Don't be so highty-tighty!' she said. 'Everybody knows you're living off of stolen money. But I know something that beats that. The old governor stole all this land around here from the Hudson's Bay Company.'

"I WOULDN'T give her the satisfaction of even looking interested," Mary went on, "but—"

Here she was interrupted by a voice shrieking: "Let me out of here! Let me out! I can't stand another word. There isn't any decency in her." Jane Worth Brownell was clambering over a dozen pairs of knees toward the door, fanning the air violently with her arms as she went, like a bather beyond her depth. Sid, who was sitting in a chair close to the witness stand, eyed her with stolid gaze. Neither he nor Minnie made any attempt to go to her assistance. When she had cleared the door-sill, still shrieking, Mary again took up her story.

"I didn't even look interested. But I remember how my heart went sick within me."

"Did you believe the statement coming from such a source?" asked Jim in surprise.

"Yes," replied Mary. "Don't you see it all fitted in with what I had learned of Devonsher temperament?"

She said this with an air of indescribably tragic conviction: as if her keen mind scorned to face anything but fact, though her heart broke in the doing.

"Mrs. Brownell seemed disappointed in my lack of interest and she proceeded to turn the barb in the wound. 'Dave always knew it and you could have helped him fix it up maybe if you'd been the kind of a wife a man could tell things to.'

" 'Are you the kind of a wife a man tells things to?' I asked her.

"She jerked her head and tied up her sunbonnet strings in a hard knot. 'I never wait for Sid to tell me things. I find them out first!' "

Poor Sid, slumping in his chair, grinned sheepishly as laughter swept the room. Mary looked at Jim appealingly. She was finding a curious relief in emptying her mind of its secrets and its inhibitions even though her sensibilities were outraged by the manner in which she was obliged to break her years of silence. She wanted this old friend to understand.

"What was the use of saying anything to her, Jim? What could she or any other woman in Antelope Basin know of what my marriage had meant to me? How could she understand that the common injuries didn't hurt me any more—that all I lived for was to help Eve away from her heritage? And it seemed to me that a good deal of what every one had said was inherited by Dave really had been suggested to him; and that if I could just keep Eve in ignorance of anything but the good side of the Devonshers, she might grow up to be a noble human being anyhow. Even at that time, all legs and arms, tomboy and vixen mixed, as she was, it seemed to me she was full of promise."

"Promise for what, Mary?" demanded Judge Jones.

Mary turned to him. "Promise of goodness. I didn't ask for anything more. I never have. All this talk about the Devonshers owing big things to the world because they were exceptional people has just bored me—after I lost my dreams of youth, at least. What Dave needed and what his daughter needed was first of all a firm foundation of sterling, steady character—of old-fashioned goodness. Then, if there were special talents inherited, that was the way to provide a balance for them.

"So, in spite of the terrible disillusion I was afraid Dave's death had brought to Eve about her father, I still believed that I had a chance to keep her in ignorance of the real taint in the Devonshers and if the taint, as I thought and still think, was the result of suggestion—the old governor's belief in fatality, Dave's environment from boyhood of tittle-tattle—I'd make a successful human being of Eve yet. It was thoughts like these that went through my head while Jane Brownell spluttered her nasty secret at me. So I fired a chance shot at her.

" 'I suppose you didn't dare to mention that stuff as long as Dave lived,' I said, as carelessly as I could. 'I don't believe you could prove it in a hundred years. At the same time I might as well tell you that if you ever breathe what you've said to another human being, I'll go to the minister and tell him that you were Dave's mistress and that I doubt Sid's paternity of Minnie.'

"She gasped at this. You see, whereas once she had been inclined to boast about whatever there may have been between her and Dave, now she was terribly set on being sanctimonious. She had all kinds of reasons for it. She wanted to be the leading woman in the Antelope Basin country and her skirts had to be clean for that. The days of pioneer laxity had passed. And she was crazy about little fat Minnie, and would fight like a tiger for the child."

Mary smiled suddenly. "It had its funny side, didn't it! We two women fighting to protect our daughters from—from the life in which we'd placed them. I'd gotten her where she lived, though, and she turned away and left me. And she didn't try that on me again."

"WAS her accusation true as to Carter Devonsher's method of acquiring his lands?" Judge Jones asked the question in every one's mind.

"I didn't try to follow the matter up. The lands were gone. Any illusions about the old governor that I could keep I wanted to keep."

"Did you succeed in keeping this particular one?" insisted the judge.

"Some time after Mrs. Brownell's visit," replied Mary, "Rob Duncan, Angus's father, brought in a load of cedar firewood I'd bought from him. The price in the Basin at that time was five dollars a load. Rob asked me ten. I asked him what the joke was and he said that the old governor and Dave had been in the habit of paying him double for things.

" 'Why?' I asked.

" 'Oh, some favors my father did for the governor need to be paid for.'

" 'You didn't do them for me,' I said.

" 'No, you just married the favors, like,' says Rob, scratching his mangy tuft of whiskers the way he always did when he was putting something over. 'My father was the one that helped Carter get the property down here away from the Hudson's Bay Company, and Carter always paid so much a month in return.'

"I saw a sudden light. 'The old governor gave your father the ranch up Gray Bull cañon to pay for that!'

" 'It didn't pay for it, though. Father went through a terrible siege for the governor. We ain't been able to work the ranch for lack of capital and we need a little ready money, rignt along.'

" 'I don't believe either Dave or his father ever paid you a cent.' I was angrier even than I'd been at Jane Brownell. 'You're just a dirty blackmailer coming to a woman after her husband whom you feared is dead.'

"Rob just scratched his beard.

" 'How can you expect me to believe such a story?' I wished I could iron out his nasty smile with the hot iron I was using.

" 'That's a sensible question,' he said. 'I knew you'd want proof. Well, my father acted as a kind of clerk for the governor and he managed to save quite a lot of kind of state papers after the crash came and Carter was shoved out of Fort Jason by Sir John Colbaith. You'd maybe like to look at some of them. I got one here; the others are out in the wagon. Sir John, he made Carter write a kind of confession of what he'd done about getting Oregon annexed to the United States. Carter, he had a wound in his arm and couldn't write; so he dictated the story to my father. Carter had signed it when Sir John read it.

He made Carter write a new letter adding a lot of stuff. My father kept the first letter. It makes out old Carter to be a good deal of a stinker even if it ain't half so full as the copy father kept of the second letter.'

"Rob laid the letter on the ironing board, keeping both hands on it. I read it and then I said to Rob, 'Did Dave ever see this?'

" 'Yes, and all the other documents too.'

"Well, I had a crazy thought for a minute that perhaps I could plant my hot iron in the middle of the letter. But the thought passed and I put the iron back on the stove. And I walked to the door and looked out at the Plaza. For the first time since her father's death, Eve was out playing with the other children. She and Angus Duncan were racing their ponies against each other. After the sunshine on the Plaza the living-room looked black, almost as black as Rob's shriveled little heart.

" 'You'd better let me have a look at the rest of the mess,' I said.

"He brought them in, in an old iron case that opened with a clasp shaped very appropriately like a snake. And he began to spread the papers out one by one on the ironing board, keeping both hands on each. They were yellow and many of them had been sealed with the Devonsher crest."

Mary paused.

"What were they, Mary?" urged Jim.

"I don't know, Jim. At first my eyes were tear-blinded and by the time I'd succeeded in clearing them, I'd reached my conclusion. I knew Rob had the material for blackmail. I didn't dare test my strength by reading the things for fear I'd turn against my own daughter who was all Devonsher."

"But how did you know the material for blackmail was there without making an examination?"

"I knew because Rob was a whelp and I knew because I understood by what these documents had done to Dave. And I swore to myself that he should have no such chance at Eve. So I asked him how much he wanted. 'Well, seeing you're a woman, I'll only ask ten dollars a month,' he said.

" 'For how long?'

" 'As long as we both live.'

" 'I'll give you fifteen dollars a month for ten years,' I said, 'if you will sign an agreement to turn all the papers over to me at the end of that time and if you will agree never to let your son or any other human being know the existence of the papers.' He haggled about it a little; then we drew up an agreement and he signed it."

There was an appalling silence in the courtroom, as if the very climax of meanness had been reached. The silence was broken by a soft groan from Eve, who bowed her face in her hands. Peter laid his scarred hand on her knee. Again there was silence, broken this time by Judge Jones, who brought his fist down on his desk as he shouted:

"Mary Devonsher, you fool!"

MARY pushed the little hat still farther back from her tired eyes and looked at the judge. "Yes, I suppose I was. But I was fighting to save Eve from what her father had been. I was and I am very ignorant of such matters. You were the only lawyer I felt I could go to and I've always felt that you'd crucify your own mother if you thought cold justice demanded it. So I managed as best I could without advice."

The judge's eye took on a haggard look. He made no attempt to comment on Mary's statement.

"Where I was the biggest fool," Mary went on, "was to think that I could have an agreement with a thing like a Duncan. When Rob died, five years after we'd signed up, I almost died, too—of relief! Within a week after the funeral—my God, that funeral with Sid Brownell singing 'The Oregon Trail' and Henry Worth howling like a dog at a band concert!—Angus, who was then about nineteen, comes along to collect the month's stipend. Rob had left him a letter, telling him the story. Angus offered to let me off, if I'd persuade Eve to marry him. I told him exactly how that suggestion appealed to me. When I'd finished, he was as white as a sheet. I continued to pay the stipend until some kind soul killed Angus. I fully expect Minnie to come along with the case of blackmail material and I expect Minnie's child to bleed Eve as soon as it can lie and steal."

"Do you pay any other blackmail, Mary?" asked Jim, very gently.

"I have paid Henry Worth a hundred dollars a year ever since Dave died, to keep him from declaring himself to be Eve's cousin."

Mary looked vaguely about the courtroom, then addressed herself to the jury as if she felt it would need more than one brain to appreciate the enormity of what that demand had been to her.

"Month in, month out, bleeding me, bleeding me! At first, it seemed as if I could not do it. Just the tavern left me—the mortgage to pay off. I did every sort of work that Jane Brownell could not keep me from getting: sewing, teaching mostly, besides the hotel work. Sid helped me, all unknowingly, by helping Eve when she was about fourteen to start her father's stud of Devonsher-Arabians going again. I used to wonder what Eve and Sid would have said if they had known where those occasional gold pieces went which Eve brought me so proudly. . . . Well, it's all over now until Minnie or Minnie's child gets busy—excepting for Henry. Perhaps—"

"But don't you see, Mary, they've lost their graft! The power of blackmail over you ended as soon as the world knew the truth." Jim's voice was husky.

Mary stared at him in bewilderment. "You mean—" Suddenly she twisted her hands together and half rose from her chair. "It *is* all over! It is! We're free of them, forever. It's been such a habit, I actually didn't realize that, Jim! Eve!" She turned toward her daughter. "Free!" half whispered Mary. "You freed us, Eve, but God in heaven, the price you pay! Oh, Eve, my little child!"

Mary ran from the witness stand and folded Eve's ruby head to her heart.

Judge Jones glared at the motionless spectators as though each and all had been guilty of some gross contempt of court. "Court is adjourned till two o'clock," he said. "Sheriff, clear the room at once."

Sid was crying softly into the crown of his broad-brimmed Stetson and did not stir. But something about the lone and strangely inflamed eye of Willy Jones moved the audience remarkably and in less than five minutes the room was empty of spectators. Jim Poindexter put his hand on Sid's shoulder.

"Get the jury over to the tavern, old-timer."

Sid looked up, his face working. "See what I've done to 'em! See! And all for that hell-cat wife of mine. And Minnie ain't much better if she is my daughter—which is open to doubt."

"Where are the documents Mary speaks of, Sid?"

"I got 'em, you bet. I ain't looked at 'em. But that iron case is hid where no one but me can get at it."

Jim nodded. "All right, Sid. Get your folks over to the tavern."

Sid rose and, without looking at Eve or Mary, led the silent jury out of the building.

It was Judge Jones who broke in on Mary, still hysterically clasping Eve to her. He said to Peter: "Take Eve to her quarters, major. Mary, come along over to dinner."

Mary, her face working, looked up at the judge. "Let me alone, Willy Jones."

Eve freed herself gently from her mother's thin arms. Her eyes were dry and burning bright. Peter laid a hand gently on her shoulder. She did not heed him but stood with her whole gaze concentrated on her mother's face.

"If you think I'm going to let you scold me, Willy Jones," Mary panted, "for all the things I've said—"

"Mary, you dear fool," mumbled the judge, "I'm going to thank you, unless"—his voice lifted suddenly and his reddened eye twinkled—"unless there are stewed prunes for dinner. If there are—Mary, consider prunes after a session like this!"

Mary, her fingers tense against her burning cheeks, rose automatically to the judge's carefully offered bait. "You may eat them or leave them." Then she added indignantly, "The idea of thinking of your food when—" She caught the twinkle in the judge's eye. Her fingers relaxed and dropped to her side. Her eyebrows lifted whimsically. "You are a clever man, Willy Jones! Yes, I'll go home with you, and see that you get a double dose of prunes!" She led the way to the door.

AT TWO o'clock, Mary, still with two bright red spots in her cheeks, was sitting in the witness chair ready to resume her testimony.

"Mrs. Devonsher," began Jim, resuming somewhat ponderously the formal address he had forgotten in the morning, "did you think Eve had gone to France up to the time Henry Worth told you otherwise?"

"I knew she had started for France. I didn't care how long she took to get there, because I knew how healing the trail always was to her. Yet I believed that she'd go straight through because she was so terribly upset she wanted to get as far from the Basin country as she could."

"Were you worried when Henry Worth reported to you that Eve was headed for the back country instead of the railroad?"

"I thought Henry lied."

"Mary, what are the facts about the Princess horse?"

"They are as Doc Peabody gave them."

"Exactly what pressure did Angus Duncan bring to bear on you?" urged Jim.

Mary looked at Jim thoughtfully. "That I shall have to refuse to answer, Jim."

"Tut! Tut! That sounds very badly, Mary. Remember, we are making a clean breast of everything here."

"Are we?" Mary's voice was enigmatic. Then she went on frankly. "I'm going to tell everything that I think will help Eve. Nothing that I think can harm her."

"BUT will the truth harm her?" exclaimed the lawyer. "Don't you see that you are making a mistake, Mary?"

Mary tapped her fingers thoughtfully on her knee. She had felt utterly safe in telling everything about the past. As to the present, in the matter of fighting for Eve, she had no confidence in any one save herself. In herself and perhaps in Peter. She looked now at the major, who returned her gaze with a little nod.

"Well," said Mary, slowly, "Angus told me he had seen Eve about a week after her departure for France holding a conference with Major Colbaith up in the Bear Country in the Forest Reserve. He said he had listened without being seen, and that evidently they were planning a trip together. I didn't believe it and yet, with all the things that were going on, I dared not tamper with it, especially when Angus added that he thought seriously of turning the iron case of papers over to the major. When you once give in to blackmail you lose all your nerve. So my cowardice lost Eve the colt she'd doted on so."

"Did you ask Eve about this alleged conference?" asked Poindexter.

"I certainly did not. Nor the major, either. I've asked Eve almost nothing since her return. She knows that I want to know nothing; that I cling to her, anyhow; that, whatever she's done or hasn't done, she's been justified."

Jim turned abruptly to Colonel Johnson. "You may take the witness, sir."

The colonel wiped his face elaborately with a crimson silk handkerchief. It might have been suspected from his hesitating manner that he did not find his task savory, yet his first question contradicted his manner flatly.

"Your mental health has been bad for some years, has it not, Mrs. Devonsher?"

Mary shot an astounded look at him. "My what?"

"Your mental health. You have had a chronic nervous breakdown, have you not, for the past six years?"

"Nonsense! I've had a bad heart for years. My mind has worked well enough to make the tavern clear fifteen hundred dollars this year. You'd better try another tack, colonel!"

"Didn't Lee Fu find you in violent hysterics after one of Angus Duncan's visits to you, and call Dr. Peabody?"

"Yes, he did. But that was the only attack I've had in my life. You ask Dr. Peabody if one attack of hysteria makes a nervous breakdown."

"Didn't Sid Brownell find you wandering alone in the road to the Junction several weeks ago, talking to yourself and wringing your hands?"

"Yes," said Mary, "but that was the same night Dr. Peabody treated me for hysteria. I *was* in very bad shape that night. Somehow I'd grown to admire the major so and Eve had seemed so fine, to me. Then to have that side of the Devonshers come out in her—well, it affected me worse than anything, I suppose—"

Eve rose and took a step toward Mary. "Mother!" Peter put out a detaining hand and gently pulled her back into her chair. Mary smiled wistfully at Eve, then turned to Johnson to await his next question.

"On what did you base your trust in Major Colbaith, Mrs. Devonsher?"

"On his evident understanding of Eve and his admiration for her."

"Did you, then, have the same confidence in Professor Freeman?"

"No, I didn't. Howard has many fine points but he lacks moral stamina. I was worried sick when Eve got herself engaged to him, though I knew well enough why she had done so. She was weary to death of the sort of men she'd been thrown with in Antelope Basin. She'd met the intellectual type in college at Laramie, had idealized it, and thought Howard a much better man than he was."

"When did you first learn of the major's distinguished connections?"

"I suspected them from the first time I heard his name. He's not the kind of man one quizzes."

"You were satisfied with his account of his errand to this part of the world?"

Mary scowled slightly. "What's the idea, colonel? Are you trying to discredit your own witness?"

"Please answer my questions, madam, without comment." The colonel appeared not to hear Mrs. Sherman's derisive snort. He kept a firm eye on Mary, who returned the look in kind.

"Certainly, I took his word for his work. Why not?"

"Didn't you suspect that he was after far bigger game than army horses?"

"I believed what he told me," insisted Mary.

"AS A matter of fact, Mrs. Devonsher, didn't you do all you could to bring about the breaking of the engagement between your daughter and Professor Freeman and to throw Major Colbaith and your daughter together in utter freedom? Didn't you practically know that Major Colbaith was a great catch? And, Puritan though you are, had Angus come to you with the alleged information about the secret trip of your daughter and the major together, wouldn't you have rejoiced that if the situation existed it would enforce a highly desirable marriage."

Mary glared at her interlocutor helplessly. Then she exclaimed, "What a vile mind you must have, Colonel Johnson!"

"As a matter of fact," Johnson went on, calmly, "didn't you bargain with Angus that if he'd send the Princess horse to Major Colbaith as though it were a present from your daughter, he could have the colt?"

"No, I didn't!" snapped Mary.

"You are under oath, Mrs. Devonsher."

Mary drew a long breath. Children were playing at Indian war before the tavern door. Faintly across the Plaza came their shrill rendering of the Sioux war cry. Old Tom Maine's patriarchal head was silhouetted against the blue sky which was framed by the window. He stirred uneasily at the sound of the war cry, then smiled at his own uneasiness. He was still smiling when he caught Mary's eye. The sight irritated her profoundly.

"You are a disgusting, immoral lot, you Oregon Trail folks!" she exclaimed.

Jim Poindexter shook his head violently. Colonel Johnson complacently rocked on his heels. The jury, which had been sympathetically following every word and gesture made by Mary, bristled obviously. Mrs. Sherman, in particular, was the picture of affronted dignity.

"I have no more questions to ask the witness," announced Colonel Johnson.

Mary rose with alacrity and, in a dead silence, took a seat back of Eve. Jim Poindexter, his face impassive, called Richard Folsom to the stand. "Bear" Folsom's oldest son strode across the room, flaming behind the ears but otherwise quite master of himself. He was a stalwart boy of twenty-one, heavily built, like his father, with his father's light blue eyes, so strange in his brown face.

After he was sworn in Poindexter asked him about his college work. Richard said that he was in his third year at Laramie and was specializing in animal husbandry. A number of derisive sniffs and chuckles from various ranchers greeted this statement.

"How did you happen to go to college, Folsom?" asked Jim. "I fancy that the folks in Antelope Basin don't know much about its advantages."

"They don't," replied the young man with a cheerful grin. "Most of them think animal husbandry is a new kind of immorality. It was Eve Devonsher gave me the idea. She's tried awful hard to keep the Devonsher-Arabian strain pure and she took me on one summer vacation about five years ago to ride herd for her. She didn't have but six horses, but Lord, they were beauties! She'd just been a teacher to me before that and the last of the Devonshers—some one you kind of looked up to and down on at the same time. But after that summer, you bet I felt different."

"What happened, Folsom?"

"I was keeping her horses up on the east flank of Flaming Lake Mountain for her and she used to ride up to my camp and stay days at a time. She was no trouble at all. Just like another fellow except she was a better cook. And say! She knew more about horses in a minute than I'll ever know. She's got the feeling born in her. They're human beings to her, I swear. I remember her sitting by the fire one night. She'd given us a licking good pancake supper and I was feeling like a lord and she started in talking to me about Arabian horses. I'd read 'Ben Hur.' But I'm here to tell you that the way she'd made me feel about the desert and those fellows with their tents and their love for their horses and the sensitiveness of them and their endurance and what you get out of such a life—why, she gave me my reason for living, right then and there! I'd always liked the Basin country, but the way a kid would, you know. She made me see it big. She made me feel as if the biggest job a guy could do was to make fine horses come out of these hills."

Richard spoke entirely to the jury and with an earnestness that before he had spoken two sentences removed the condescension from the faces of the twelve men and women most of whom had known him since he was born.

"When I got home that fall, I began to work on my father to get his permission to go up to Laramie. But he wouldn't see it. Same old line about what was good enough for him was good enough for me. So I worked for Eve out of school hours and saved and she loaned me enough extra so that I got through the first year. The next year, father saw I was in for blood, so he came through and helped me out."

Judge Jones spoke suddenly. "Folsom, did you tell your father that Eve Devonsher ran off his horses?"

Indignantly: "I did not, judge! All the same, she kind of had a right to if she did."

"Explain yourself!" ordered the judge.

Richard glanced at his father, then grinned; and with his blue eyes brimming with mischievous light, he said slowly: "Well, dad never would explain to me how he got the old Queenie mare that he got his Devonsher Arabians out of. But I always did know. She's fourteen years old now, so I was seven when dad brought her in, just a waggle-legged colt not more than three or four days old with his brand fresh on her and set her to nurse at an old mare that had borne her colt dead the day before. About a week after, Eve Devonsher came up and claimed the colt as one dropped by her Selma II. But Eve couldn't prove anything. Selma had been two weeks or so early and in the care of an Indian at the time. But me, I always did know where Queenie came from because father just had to tell mother about it and I heard him."

A great guffaw of laughter greeted this tale. "Bear" Folsom was very popular and a highly successful rancher. The mixing of colts, the surreptitious branding of newborn colts was still looked upon as a joke in these days but one generation removed from open range, with all its attendant promiscuity. "Bear" Folsom himself joined in the laughter.

WHEN quiet had been restored Jim asked an apparently irrelevant question: "Folsom, did Miss Devonsher ever talk to you about Angus Duncan?"

"No, sir."

"Did Angus come up to your camp at Flaming Lake?"

"He used to come up once in a while and look the horses over; lots of ranchers did that. There was a great deal of interest in that little stud."

"Did you personally observe that Eve Devonsher hated or feared Angus Duncan?"

"No. She acted more or less indifferent to him."

"Where were you at the time your father's horses were stolen?"

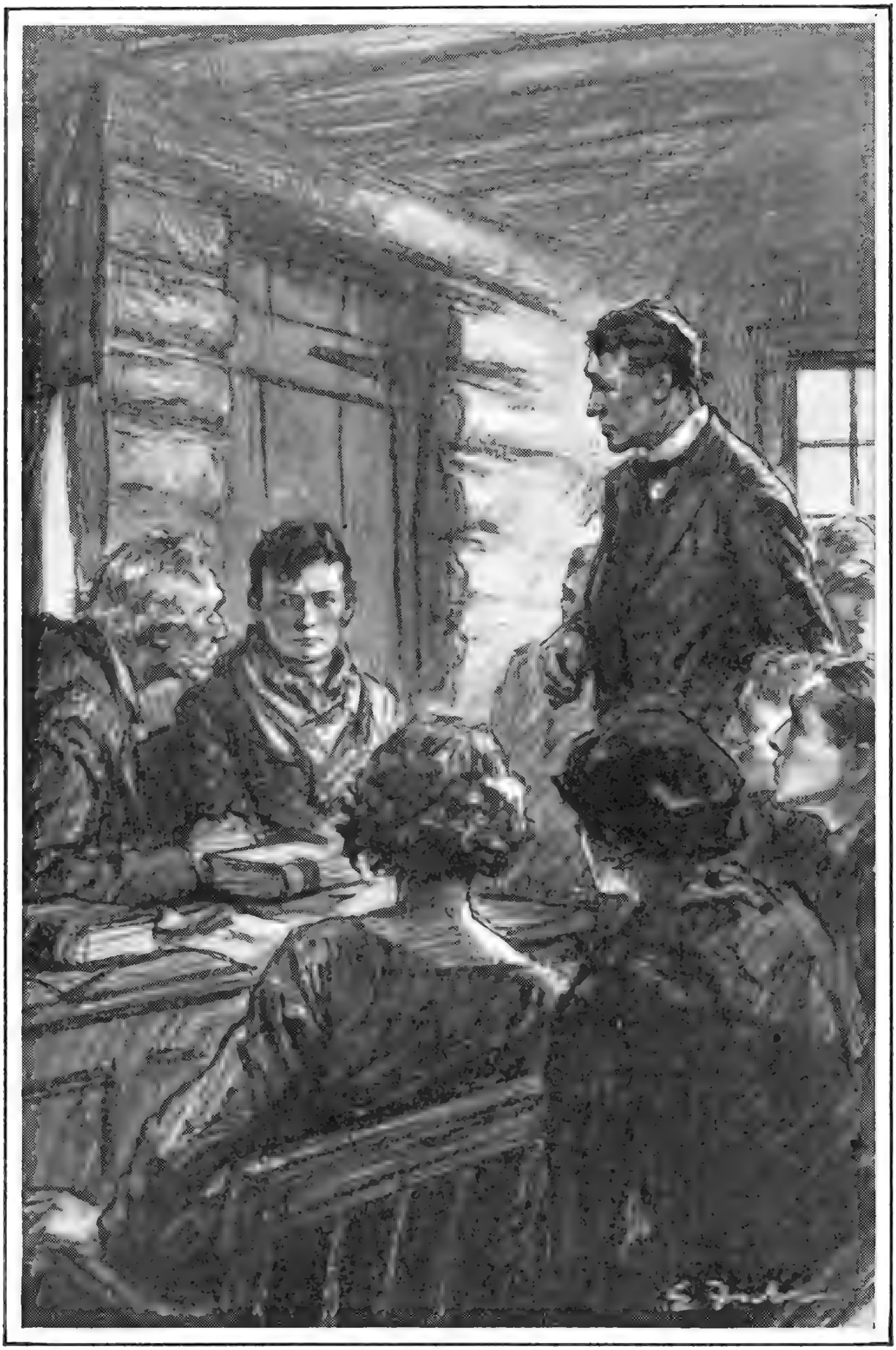
"I was at home."

"When your father reported the matter to you, did he say he suspected Eve Devonsher?"

"No. As a matter of fact he had a suspicion, he said, that Henry Worth was the guilty party."

"Did he give any reason for that?"

"He and Henry have been debating about some money Henry's claimed for years father owed him. Father's first thought was that Henry was collecting the bill! All this stuff about Eve is hindsight on



"Folsom, did you tell your father Eve Devonsher ran off his horses?" Indignantly: "I did not, judge! But she kind of had a right to, if she did."

dad's part. And why not drop the horse-stealing matter, anyhow? The horses have been paid for." The young man lifted his head, scornfully. "What's the great idea in conducting the trial so as to raise such a stench in Antelope Basin, anyhow? Any fool would know Eve Devonsher wouldn't shoot a man, and the horses are paid for."

Jim Poindexter, out of the corner of his eye, caught a look of acquiescence in the faces of several of the jurors. Before the state could protest he turned to Colonel Johnson with the usual formula. "You may take the witness, sir."

"Folsom," began the colonel, "were you acquainted, as it were, with the Princess horse?"

"Yes, she was the last of the breeding mares in Eve's stud. Glanders cleared the rest out two years ago."

"If Miss Devonsher knew that Angus Duncan's brutality had lost the colt for the Princess horse, what would have been Miss Devonsher's reaction to the information?"

"I object to that question!"—from Jim Poindexter.

Colonel Johnson smiled.

"Have you ever seen Miss Devonsher when she was angry?"

"Yes, sir. She's a person to fear when she's angry."

"Explain yourself to the jury."

"I mean"—reluctantly—"she has a lot of temper and she keeps it under control until she feels something really wrong has been done. Then, while she doesn't let go exactly, she looks like—like— Well, a fellow at school says she looks like a painting for 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord!' And between how she looks and what she does she makes you want to hide under the bed."

"Did you ever see her 'let go,' as you call it, Folsom?"

"Once!"

"Tell the jury about it."

Richard looked at Mrs. Sherman. "When I was down here at the Easter recess, this year, there was a bunch of us fellows having dinner in the tavern. We didn't know Eve was anywhere round and we got to roasting Professor Freeman. We'd cough our heads off as if we had asthma and beg the Germans to pardon our hard colds and—well, some of it was a good deal rougher than that. And finally one of the fellows said the professor was a traitor and was using Eve Devonsher for a blind, and he added some foul talk that some of us thought was going too far. But before we could shut him off Eve sailed out of her mother's room. She jerked this six-foot guy that was talking foul away from the table and she gave him a horse-whipping that cut his coat to pieces. When she'd finished she flung him under the table and walked out of the room. The next minute almost she flashed by the window on Shawnee, going up into the hills to ride off her anger."

Young Folsom paused. Then, as if he realized the awful and suggestive weight of his evidence, he added:

"But remember, that's the only time I ever saw her let go, in all these years I've known her so well. And that guy deserved what he got. And remember this: The woman who gave the horse-whipping was the same woman I saw a week later—" He turned to Mrs. Miller, in the jury box. "You mustn't mind this, Annie! . . . Annie Miller was sitting in the tavern living-room waiting for Johnny, who was over in Henry's Place. I was talking things over with Eve, and finally in comes Johnny, roaring drunk, a big cut on his cheek and one eye closed. I was for putting him out but Eve told me to keep out of it. She went up to Johnny, who was ugly and threatening, and began to sympathize with him because he was so badly hurt. In five minutes she had him crying over himself while she washed and plastered up his face. When she'd finished, she tried to turn him over to Annie. And by Jove, Annie said she didn't want the bum!

"EVE didn't show any surprise. She let Johnny go to sleep on the couch and she began to talk to Annie. She said that life was a thing of inexplicable difficulty to a woman! She said that women could do their best work in the world only if they were sensitive, and if they were sensitive life rubbed them on the raw. She said she knew that it must be torment living with a man like Johnny, but she reminded Annie that she and Johnny had a baby every year, that there were five of them now, and how would she support them, if she threw their father out? She said that it was up to Annie to stop having children and to see to it that Johnny worked the ranch to the limit. 'You'll never cure him of drunkenness,' said Eve. 'Your heart will ache all the time. But you are a gorgeous mother and your children adore you. That is your compensation. You shall have no joy of wifehood but a great happiness in motherhood.' And Annie got up and woke Johnny and we helped put him into the buckboard and Annie drove him home. What's the matter, Johnny?"

Richard chuckled as a sheepishly bowed figure bolted out of the rear door. Annie Miller sat with her eyes on Eve.

COLONEL JOHNSON during Richard's story had been walking the floor, deterred from interrupting only by the judge's threatening eye. He now explained impatiently: "After this, answer only what I ask you. Did Angus Duncan tell you recently that he and Eve Devonsher were not friends?"

"Yes, when I asked him to lend me money to go to college with he said he'd see a pet of Eve's in hell before he'd help him. We had a few words and I hit him and he licked me. I learned then that he had it in for Eve."

"Give the jury the details of the few words."

"Colonel, I couldn't! But I will say that if Eve ever did hear him talk as he did to me, she—" Richard stopped, grew a little white and cried, glaring at the colonel, "The more I try to stick up for her, the more you make me damn her!"

"Exactly," agreed the colonel. "I'll excuse you now, Folsom."

Richard wiped the sweat from his face, gave Eve a pleading, rueful glance and retreated to the back of the room.

Peter suddenly said to Jim Poindexter: "Why don't you put Miss Devonsher on the stand in her own defense, Poindexter? It's the next thing to do."

He spoke in a low voice, but the room was very still and a rustle of expectancy followed his words. Jim hesitated.

Judge Jones tapped thoughtfully on his desk and looked at Eve. She sat, deadly white, obviously steeling herself for the ordeal. Old Tom Maine, sitting as usual in silhouette against the north window, suddenly called out, "Give 'em the whole story, Eve, like I did." Then he gave a little cough and his head sagged on his breast. The man sitting next to the old trapper turned to him with a smile, only suddenly to clutch Tom's right arm and exclaim, "The old man's fainted!"

There was quick commotion as every one stood to see and quick calls arose for Doc Peabody. They pushed chairs back and laid the old man on the floor. Doc Peabody was hailed, just as he was leaving the livery and garage in his buckboard. When he entered the courtroom there was sudden silence, nor did any one speak while the little doctor knelt beside the motionless form in its trappings of other days. It seemed to Eve, sitting tensely in her place, that an hour passed while the doctor made his examination. As a matter of fact only a few minutes had gone by, when the doctor's low voice reached her.

"The old man is gone. Get a door, somebody, and carry him over to Henry's Place."

They lifted out the door that shut off the judge's office, and the room was emptied of spectators, as a silent line followed the improvised bier from the courthouse to the little room back of Henry's bar. Judge Jones looked from Eve to Jim, then at the tense faces of the jurors.

"I guess," he said, "I might as well adjourn court for an hour—say until four o'clock. The jury will feel better satisfied looking out the tavern windows than listening to evidence, till Tom is properly dead."

The jurors smiled sheepishly but in full acquiescence and Sid, with great alacrity, led his flock out-of-doors. Jim Poindexter at once took Eve by the arm and walked with her to her cell.

"I believe the major is right! It's the pyschological moment!" he explained. "The best thing I can do is to get you on to the stand for yourself as soon as possible."

Eve shook her head.

"Don't you see," urged Poindexter, "that the jury must by now be thoroughly muddled by all this stuff that's been brought out about your family and your character and your motives? I've lent a hand to the muddling, just as I told you I was going to. Now you have only to repeat what you've told me as to what you were doing at the time of the murder and what led up to your leaving Antelope Basin. Remember, you had been heckled beyond endurance and your idea never was revenge but to get away from it all. But keep away from all detail. I shall see to it that practically every question I ask you, you can answer with a yes or no. We'll make all the web of evidence of no moment by the utter brevity and simplicity of our tale. Do you see, now?"

"I see," said Eve, slowly. "Then, as far as my evidence is concerned, we ignore practically all that has been said. Do you think we can manage that with Judge Jones taking the stand he has?"

"I'm trusting your cleverness," replied Jim. "I'm not going to coach you, other than to give you the basic principle. Don't get involved with your ancestors, don't show any interest in what you may or may not have been blackmailed into believing. That jury believes you are a pretty fine sort, or I miss my guess. You give them a simple story that they can set their teeth in and they'll give a verdict largely uninfluenced by Carter Devonsher or Angus Duncan. Now lie down and rest, and don't worry."

"Don't worry!" repeated Eve with her father's own little twisted smile. "All right, Uncle Jim. I'll try not to."

The lawyer scrutinized the white face under the splendor of the rumpled mane of hair. "You've borne up in great style, Eve. Please God, a week from now, you shall be on the way to France or to any other place your fancy dictates." He patted her shoulder heartily and clanged out of the cell.

EVE stood listening to his receding footsteps; then slowly she lifted her hands and, clutching a bar of the door, she shook it until she had strength to shake it no more. Then she bowed her head against the green wall beneath the window and groaned. When the trembling that followed her shaking of the door had ceased, she fell to pacing the floor. Thus Peter found her a quarter of an hour later.

"For the moment, Eve," he said, "Tom Maine has utterly outdistanced you in popular interest."

"I'm afraid it's for only a moment, though! They all know I'm to go on the stand and they wouldn't miss my evidence even for old Tom's funeral. What a disappointment awaits them!"

"Why? Aren't you to go on, after all?"

"Yes. But after the evidence of the other witnesses, the simple little story of my two weeks in the woods is going to be very stupid."

"Is that all you are going to take up?" Pete looked incredulous.

"That's all Uncle Jim wants me to do. Of course, I don't see how he can think Colonel Johnson and Judge Jones will permit it."

"He doubtless trusts to your own quick wits to handle the two of them. But—Eve, I'm sure he's making a mistake."

Eve, who had not ceased to pace the cell, now paused before Peter. "Why?" she asked.

"You can't imagine the depth of interest that has been roused in the Basin concerning the doings of Carter Devonsher and his son and you. They actually believe that Carter's relationship to the Worths and the Duncans has culminated logically in your murder of Angus Duncan. I believe the jury must have been affected in the same way and I don't think that you can confine your evidence to the two weeks before Duncan's death and satisfy the jury. Will you let me urge my point of view on Poindexter?"

Eve did not reply directly. "Peter," she said, "if you were in my place, what would you do, what would you say on the stand this afternoon?"

"I'd tell the jury the story of my life, the whole story, the true story. I'd tell it as you told me the tale about your father. I'd hold back nothing. If ever there was a case where any stooping to legal tricks and formulae would be fatal this is the one. Eve, I can't bear to think that in such a situation as this you'd rise to less than truthfulness even to escape a few years in Rawlins. I can't bear the thought of you now, fearing to face not the future alone but the whole of your family's past."

Peter put his two hands on Eve's shoulders, and looked into her eyes. She was only a little shorter than he. They made an extraordinarily interesting pair standing thus in the barred, shadowy green light of the cell. Eve did not speak and after a moment Peter in his turn began to walk up and down beside the cot while Eve, standing against the door, watched him with inscrutable eyes.

"It's not that I have moral scruples as

such," he began again. "At least, I don't think I have. Really. It's—it's the same sort of feeling that I had when, in entire ignorance of the situation, I urged you to come back and take punishment. Well, you did. Pluckily enough, too. And even though you almost broke my faith in you when you ran away, you came back again. And that was the pluckiest thing I ever saw a woman do. But now, after all that you've faced, your lawyer is asking you to skulk the issue, to funk it; and to come out of this, if physically free, a prisoner for the rest of your life to the scandalous opinions of your community.

"You doubtless say to yourself, I shall not be in this community. I shall spend the rest of my days in France or in England. Very well. But Eve, wherever you go, you will be fettered by the deeds of your grandfather and your father as well as your own. Their traits are bone of your bone. The story of Carter Devonsher's treason is either an historical fact, or it's a dastardly calumny. I believe that you know the truth. Only you know whether or not that truth drove you to crime. Perhaps Poindexter's method might save you from Rawlins. But, Eve, can't you understand that only the truth can make you free?"

Eve, her head a little bent, a graceful, ardent, troubled figure leaning against the barred door, followed Peter's every word eagerly. She understood him very clearly. She knew that he was demanding of her a greater sacrifice than he could guess. And she knew that if she underwent the sacrifice it would be, in the last analysis, because he demanded it. Not that her intelligence did not tell her that Peter's cleverness in grasping the psychology of the jury was very much greater than Poindexter's, for she knew that it was. Not that her fine sense of service and of civic responsibility did not respond fully to his plea. The last ten years had been on Eve's part years of selfless devotion to the people of Antelope Basin.

But Eve was uncertain as to her own capacity for taking punishment. Not so much the punishment of imprisonment as that of standing before the packed courtroom and, one by one, holding up to the light those hard facts which for so many years had been used to torture her. Her very soul was raw from them. She had a horror of speaking of them utterly out of proportion to the significance of the facts themselves. But she had been tormented with them during her plastic and formative years and she was powerless to change her feeling regarding them. She knew that there was but one influence strong enough to assure her that she could and would do the task Peter demanded of her. And that influence was her passionate desire to stand well in Peter's eyes.

Brooding, with her gaze on his waiting face, she acknowledged to herself that no sacrifice on her part would be too great if only she could obtain and keep the admiration of this self-controlled Englishman.

"You don't know how much you are asking of me, Peter!" she said at last.

"Ah, but I think I do! I am not a fool, Eve!"

"No, you are not a fool," she repeated slowly. "But you are a man and so"—with the twisted smile—"you have blind spots."

"Not where you are concerned."

Eve stared at Peter. From Peter she turned a long, unseeing look on the neglected tray. From the tray she looked up at the fathomless blue of the Wyoming sky. And her eyes still were on the oblong of sapphire when she said in a low voice, "I shall do as you suggest, Peter."

PETER drew a quick breath, limped quickly across the cell and drew Eve into his arms. "Oh, my dear!" he whispered. "My very dear!"

Eve closed her eyes against his cheek. For a moment there was utter silence. Then Peter said brokenly: "I know what it will cost you in pain. I know! But I asked it of you only because I love you so much that I dared to demand the big thing from you. You know that, don't you, Eve, dearest?"

Eve put her head back to look into his eyes. "Yes, I know it, Peter. And I'm thankful for it."

"Thankful!" protested Peter. Then he kissed her. And it was as though in that single kiss he sought to blot out all the suffering that either of them had known.

After a moment, he said softly, "And when it's all over you are going home to England, with me."

Eve shivered. "After it's all over—Oh, Peter! Peter! How can I tell where I shall be when it's all over? Help me, Peter! Help me to be what you want me to be!"

"I will," said Peter stoutly. "I'm right here, old girl, where you can hold fast to me. And I'll be in the courtroom, my heart holding fast to yours, every moment."

Eve did hold fast for a few seconds, then she moved away from Peter to say, "I don't have to tell them this—about you and me, do I?" There was the irrepressible gleam in her eyes.

Peter chuckled. "Blessed if I wouldn't be delighted to have you!"

Eve shook her head decidedly. "No! This is mine. A joy wholly mine that I share with no one but you."

"So be it," agreed Peter. After a moment, he said: "You will want to see Poindexter, at once?"

Eve nodded and Peter hurried away.

A few moments later, Jim Poindexter rushed down the corridor. "What's the trouble, Eve?" He stood beside the cot where Eve was sitting, looking down on her anxiously.

"Uncle Jim, when I go on the witness stand this afternoon, I want you to let me tell the story of my life."

"Is that a joke?" demanded the lawyer.

"Not to me. I've been having a long talk with Major Colbaith, and I've decided to take his advice."

"Which is?"

"I'll tell you." And Eve repeated all but the very last of her conversation with Peter.

Jim heard her through without interruption. When she had finished he seated himself beside her and took her right hand in both of his warm palms.

"Eve," he said, "are you planning some sort of a confession? Are you guilty on either of those counts?"

"I'm planning a confession, yes," replied Eve slowly. "But it's not the sort of confession you think it will be. Do you think I'm guilty on either count, Uncle Jim?"

The lawyer released her hand and rumpled his hair. "I think," he said, "that you shot Duncan but I don't think you had anything to do with running the horses. And, girl, I don't think any jury in the world would give you thirty days for a pot-shot at Angus. I don't believe for a minute you did anything so rotten as to steal horses."

Eve sat with her hands clasped loosely in her lap, her face white and rigid. Finally she said, "Well, you will know all about all of it, this afternoon."

"Aren't you going to tell me now?" exclaimed Jim, in alarm.

"No, I'm not," returned Eve flatly. "Your job is to see that the loathly colonel lets me alone. The rest is between me and the jury."

"You make me cut a poor figure, Eve," protested Poindexter.

"I'm sorry! But I haven't enough will power to make me go through this thing twice. Tell them you arranged for the confession. Won't that be solace for your professional pride?"

Jim looked into the fine tortured face and his own suddenly softened. "God help you, my dear! You won't let *me!* But I do think you are doing not only a big thing but a very wise one."

"I'm neither big nor wise," murmured Eve. "I'm just a woman, Uncle Jim, reaching blindly for the light."

And with this Poindexter was obliged to content himself. He went thoughtfully in search of Judge Jones and Eve flung herself on the cot and closed her burning eyes. The hour that remained to her before two o'clock she could give to formulating her story.

THE courtroom was packed. The doorway was filled with faces, and children sat atop of each other in every window sill. For one breathless instant Eve paused panic-stricken beside the judge's desk. Then she distinguished Peter's face and her mother's, just behind it, and she went steadily to her place.

Eve took the oath in a silence of unbelievable solemnity. It was as if hers was the only voice in the world. The *truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help her God!* Words of terrible significance.

She sat in the uncomfortable spindle-backed chair, a slender brown hand grasping either wooden arm, chin up, apparently gallantly unafraid. It seemed to Peter as if all the light in the sun-drenched courtroom centered on the ruddy beauty of Eve's head. It seemed to him too that this could not be the childishly pleading girl who had clung to him in the cell, but that a very great actress who simulated her appearance was about to play an astonishing part.

It seemed to Eve's mother that it was not a woman of dignity and beauty who sat in the witness chair, but the little child who had wept all night in the cedar grove over her father's tragic end. And it seemed to Judge Jones that the inhibited, intense personality, not to be reckoned on or with, that he had known as Eve Devonsher suddenly had become direct and vocal. And he knew that the orientation of the trial had been taken quite definitely out of his hands.

"Your Honor," said Jim Poindexter, "I have called Miss Devonsher to testify on her own behalf. She told me this noon that she wished to tell her own story in her own way. She wished if possible to give her evidence uninterrupted by questions until she has finished. It is my understanding that Miss Devonsher feels that what she has to say is in the nature of a confession."

"If you want to say that the prisoner wishes to plead guilty, why not say so?" The judge's voice was brusque.

"Because, your Honor, Miss Devonsher has not said that she wished to plead guilty. She asks for a patient hearing on the part of the Court and the jury of her angle on all the evidence that has been presented both for and against her. I am well aware that such procedure is open to many legal objections. But, your Honor, this entire case, as you yourself have said, has been conducted utterly without reference to nice legal points. You have been seeking, you have said, a larger justice than a mere verdict of 'Guilty' or 'Not guilty' of the crime named. My client feels that she can obtain such justice only by telling her own story. Your Honor, I have not heard that story. But knowing the prisoner, I have applauded her wisdom in resolving to tell it."

"Am I to understand," asked Colonel Johnson, "that the prisoner is asking that the state shall not cross-examine?"

Before Poindexter could reply, Eve said in a low voice: "If the state wishes to cross-examine after I've finished, it is welcome to do so. But the effort to tell a connected story I shall find very great. I merely wanted to ward off if I could any heckling on Colonel Johnson's part until I had finished. By that I mean his loud protests that this or that cannot be permitted as evidence. Let me have my say. After that he may have his."

"The Court grants your request," declared Judge Jones, ignoring the colonel's look of consternation.

"But, your Honor—" The colonel fairly pranced up and down.

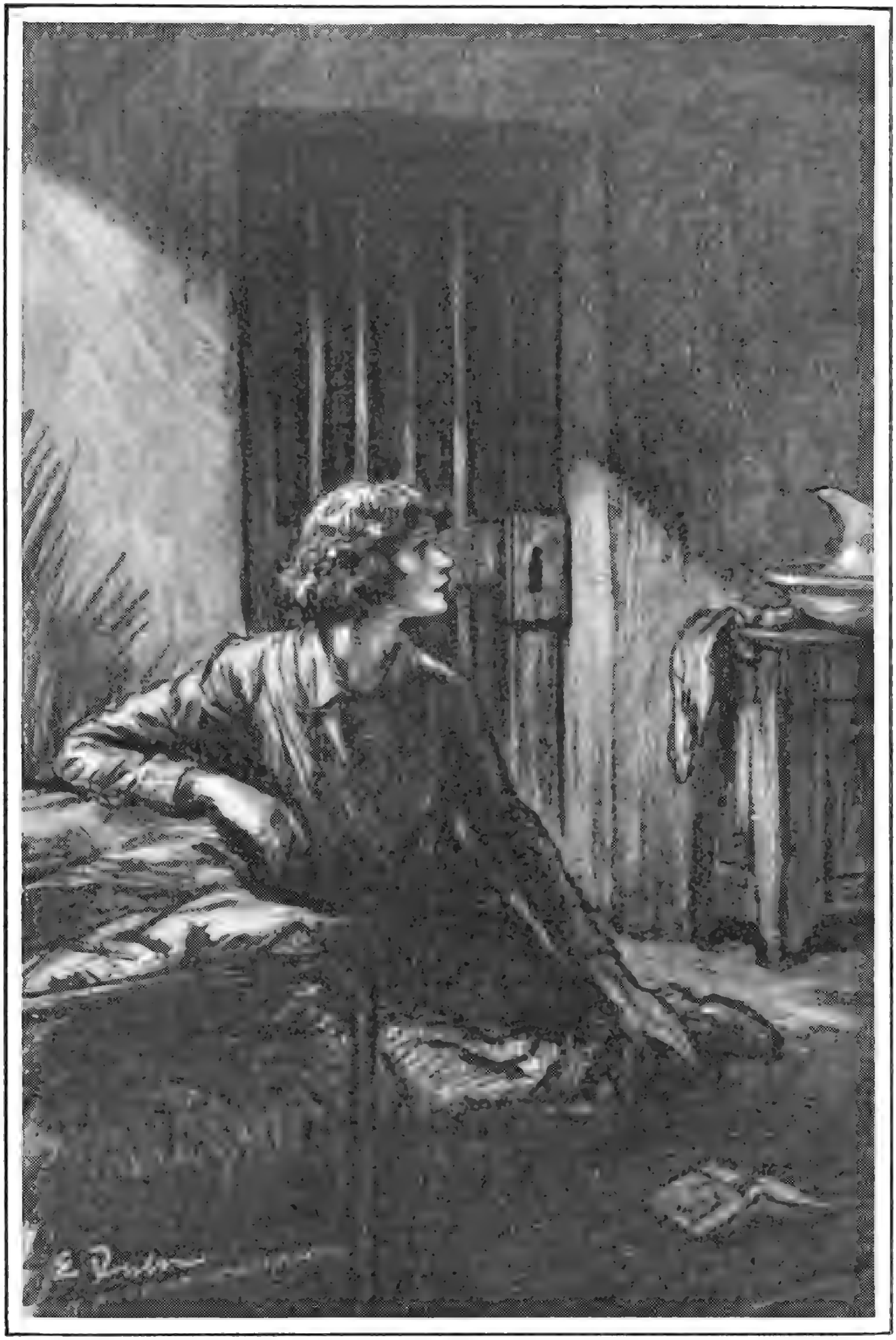
"Don't be a legal fool, Johnson!" exploded the judge. "Get on with the evidence, Poindexter."

And so Eve, eyes on the jury, began to speak.

"AFTER my father died, Minnie Brownell began to call me the horse thief's daughter. As if I were the title of a dime novel! I tried various ways to make her stop but couldn't, so I went to her father about it. I remember just how disgusted Sid looked. I had seen him saddle up and start on a trip to the Junction and I climbed on our old Sally barebacked and with only a rope halter on her and followed him. I'd been trying to catch him alone for a week; but Mrs. Brownell always had interrupted us whenever I began to talk to her husband. One might have thought his presence priceless!

"I overtook Sid about two miles north of the town, just where the Junction trail turns toward Antelope Springs. You remember there's a flat-topped rock there. Sid and I dismounted and sat down on it. I told him about Minnie. As I said, he was troubled and disgusted.

" 'I'll make her stop,' he said. 'It's pure meanness that's keeping that horse-thief idea alive, anyhow. Everybody knows that Dave was off his head after he got back from Cuba. I noticed it time and again, especially when he got talking about horses. For a week before he started on that last trip he kept coming over to the livery and talking to me about how the only thing he had been able to do for Antelope Basin had been to give it a decent strain of horses and now what the Indians hadn't run off he'd had to sell and that the folks that he'd sold to weren't keeping up the strain. Then he'd talk about you, Eve, and how he had nothing to give you but debts and family troubles, and how even the old family home had been taken from you and made into a tavern. Finally he made up his pack train and started off. Before he left he came to me and said,



The hour that remained before the opening of the court, Eve gave to formulating her story for the jury.

very quietly, "If anything happens to me, it will happen because I'm going out to get Eve some horses." I never saw him again till he came charging across the Plaza on that white horse. Do you know where and what that white horse is, Eve?'

"I shook my head. 'Well,' Sid went on, 'it's boarding up at Miller's till the legal end of your father's affairs is straightened up. I think Judge Jones, what with a new mortgage on the tavern and other ways, is going to be able to have that horse left with you. And Eve, she's a pure-bred Devonsher-Arabian, only six years old. That, my girl, is going to be the beginning of the stud you're going to start for your father's memory.'

"Of course, I took fire at once, and rode back to Antelope Basin on wings. It was a good thought of Sid's. My mother was delighted and somehow with all sorts of financial contriving on mother's part and expert knowledge on Sid's, my stud was started with the white horse, Selma I, and her colt, which became one of the best stallions I ever saw, Abdul I. And it's the history of that stud that will make you understand my history since last spring, when Major Colbaith came here to buy horses.

"I never had more than half a dozen horses at any one time. I made very little money out of them. But I took the keenest satisfaction in feeling that I was carrying on one of my father's dreams.

"One might think that, all the circumstances considered, the people of Antelope Basin would have wanted to help me get ahead. Here was a fine sentimental setting for a western movie, if you please: the widow who had known better days, living in penury; the young daughter struggling to retrieve the fallen name and fortunes.

"But human nature doesn't work that way. As a matter of hard fact we were two unprotected females earning a difficult living. Every penny counted. I never had any spending money. A new dress occurred once in three or four years. I never had toys or books other than the old Devonsher library of less than a hundred volumes. Mrs. Brownell saw to it that we kept to ourselves and mother got the reputation of a hard, parsimonious, driving Yankee. Oh, I knew! The children at school saw to it that I learned of every epithet that was applied to us.

"Then my fine little colts appeared, and in spite of the explanations made by Judge Jones and Sid, folks raised their eyebrows. Why was I allowed to keep stolen property? There was a tremendous amount of gossip, but it finally died down and I was able to sell the little mare, Lallah, for about half what she was worth, to Bear Folsom. He had bad luck with her. She died of colic before he'd had her a month. He claimed I hadn't given her to him in good condition and he rode me hard about it. I was sixteen at the time. He rode me as he never would have dared to ride a man. Finally, I let him have a gelding for fifty dollars that should have brought me four hundred. But I was thankful even for that and gave the money to mother. I suppose it went either to the Duncans or the Worths.

"ABDUL I was the most beautiful horse I ever raised. When I was about seventeen he came into service at stud and one cold spring day, when I was blanketing him in the corral, Rob Duncan came to me and said he wanted to buy the stallion. I laughed at him, for I knew he'd never pay what the horse was worth; and that made him furious. He went away and came back with a letter he told me to read. It was a copy of that same Carter Devonsher confession my mother told you about.

"Rob told me that he never had shown it to any one else, but that he'd certainly show it to my mother if I didn't sell him Abdul I. Well, I merely laughed at him again. I asked him why I should care about the tale of my grandfather's stealing the land when all the land was gone from us, anyhow. As for the disgrace of it, I assured him that he who was down need fear no fall! But Rob said it was not all gone. The tavern and its few acres remained and he could take the necessary legal steps to have it returned to the state. I was very ignorant and he was able to make me believe that. He frightened and worried me horribly. I was afraid to go to Judge Jones because I knew, if Rob was right, that the judge, for all his friendship for mother and me, would see that the property was restored to whoever the rightful owner might be. But I was not going to let Rob blackmail me out of that horse. And I didn't. I continued to laugh at him. It ended in Rob's getting stud service free. I knew he'd steal it otherwise. And naturally I didn't tell my overworked, overworried mother anything about it.

"UP TO this time Angus and I had been fairly good friends. Angus had many good points. He was brutal to animals, but that was a common enough failing among the men and boys of the Basin. But he was a very hard-working boy and always very obliging. He never made any bones of the fact that when he grew up he wanted to marry me. I used to laugh at him. I knew of no better comment to make.

"The summer before I went to college, Angus got into the habit of coming to see me when I was working with my horses. He always offered to help me, but I always refused. He wasn't gentle enough for horses that all were 'woman-broke.' As if to prove my statement, Abdul I, who was perfectly tractable for me, would almost kick the stall down if Angus came near him. It made Angus furious, particularly as he liked to impress people with the idea that he was a horseman and my closest adviser and friend.

"One afternoon, a man from Cheyenne came down to look at Abdul and a mare, Selma II. Angus was there as usual and I was called suddenly to the house. Mother had a heart attack. Of course, Angus undertook to show off. He tried to grab Abdul by the forelock as he'd seen me and the stallion bit him on the arm.

"I heard a shouting in the corral and rushed out there. Angus had roped and hobbled Abdul and was beating him with a pitchfork and running in and kicking him as—as no human being can kick a horse. The Cheyenne man was shouting at Angus and trying to hold him, but Angus would make two of him. I picked up a quirt and lashed Angus across the face. It brought him to his senses. He stood and glared at me a moment. Then he went out of the corral, mounted his horse and rode away. He came back the next day to apologize. Apologize! For the unspeakable kick I had seen him deliver! . . . That began my hatred of Angus Duncan. We scarcely ever saw each other again until I had finished college.

"While I was away at Laramie, things happened to my little stud of horses. Selma II had a colt that mysteriously became the daughter of an old mare belonging to Bear Folsom. Regina's two daughters, a filly and a grown mare, got off their feed and mother sent them up to board on the Hotchkiss ranch, where they were able to get young clover. While there the filly disappeared. A year afterward I saw her in Cheyenne—or her twin—with the Hotchkiss brand on her. The mare had her colt up at the Hotchkiss place but it was no good at all, just a buckskin Indian pony, which mother told Hotchkiss he could keep for the little mare's board. About four years after this I heard Bill Hotchkiss boasting that he had the prettiest little Devonsher-Arabian four-year-old in the state. He and I had some bitter words about it but I got nowhere.

"There were other things went wrong, however. When I graduated from college, I still had two or three horses that were promising breeding material, and I made my plans to build up the business again. And Angus turned up, asking to go into partnership with me! At first he seemed merely surprised and hurt by my refusal and entirely incredulous. But, when I persisted in refusing him, he suddenly reverted to type. His father had died—I remember how angry Angus was later when I asked him if he thought his father had blackmailed his way into heaven! Family traits are curious things. Angus came into the tavern one evening when I was alone in the house. He had with him the old iron document case and he stood guard over me while I read its contents."

For the first time Eve paused and turned her gaze away from the jury. Through the door, over the cluster of heads, gleamed the fine crest of Gray Bull. Eve's eyes, a burning gray-blue, swept the familiar peak, then returned to the jury.

"Up to that time," she said slowly, "in spite of all our troubles, I'd really been only a girl, believing always that somehow happiness loomed just ahead and that if I played the game in a sportsmanlike manner I'd win to that happiness. But how in the world is one to be sportsmanlike with cads? . . . I'd been unhappy all my life, troubled all my life—more so, I observed, than any of the other young people I knew. I, of course, knew what the immediate causes of this were. Poverty and father's trouble and Mrs. Brownell's meanness. But after I had read Angus's precious documents, I knew what were the fundamental reasons for all that had happened to us. They all bred back to the manner in which my grandfather had conducted his life.

"And that evening with Angus watching me with his wolf eyes, while he clutched the documents as if he were afraid I'd destroy them, that evening I had my first taste of utter hopelessness.

"You see you could come up cheerfully after coming a cropper with a stud of horses because you knew that, after all, you'd handled the business stupidly. And you could believe you could reinstate your father's integrity, because the worst of his reputation had been built up by a vindictive woman. And you could laugh at blackmail—because, when you've suffered from calumny as many years as I have, you learn that your own self-respect is all that counts in those long hours when you're alone with your horse and the stars. And you can even ignore other people's caddishness and vindictiveness if you make up your mind that your chief business in the reform line is with yourself. If you are very busy fighting your own hot temper and your own supersensitiveness, you haven't time to reform your neighbors. But those papers of my grandfather's—"

Eve looked at Judge Jones with a face as tense as his own. "Then I knew," she spoke as if to the judge alone, "then I knew I was not to capture a personal happiness in this life; that the taint of the things Carter Devonsher had done was to haunt me always. And I wished that I were dead and through with it all.

"Angus got tired of waiting for me to speak. 'Awful shock, I'm afraid, Eve. But you and I'll keep it in the family, eh? Not the kind of thing to let out. Lord, how the Oregon Historical Society would writhe if they knew of these!'

" 'Why don't you try blackmailing them?' I asked.

" 'You don't call this blackmail, I hope.' He was very indignant. 'I think you ought to be informed about your family. And I think you ought to make a business partner of me and marry me so that I can help you keep control of all this information.'

" 'Does my mother know any of this?' I asked him.

" 'Not yet,' he answered.

"You see there was my raw spot. I could stand the thought of the rest of the world knowing. But not mother. Mother with her New England pride which my father had all but crucified, and mother with her contempt for the Devonshers. And I half Devonsher! Oh, I couldn't bear to have her know. Yet I would not be blackmailed.

" 'Angus,' I said, 'if you ever make it possible for my mother to know this stuff, I shall shoot myself.' And I said it so that he knew I meant it. He looked at me at first stupidly, then with an expression of consternation.

" 'But suppose your mother learns, not through me.'

" 'You are the person with the evidence. If you've told any one else, or your father has, you'd better warn them. You've taken all the hope out of my life,' I told him. 'I'd as lief die now, and a little rather than years from now.'

"Angus put the papers in the case, and started for the door; then he came back and shook his fist in my face, furiously. 'You think you're damned clever, don't you, Eve Devonsher? But you just wait. I'm not through yet.'

"And he wasn't through—though as time went on I dared occasionally to hope that he was. During the years of my teaching he made no real attempt at blackmail. He pursued me as if he were very much in love with me. We had some very unpleasant scenes and I was delighted when he finally married Minnie Brownell.

"HENRY WORTH didn't bother me until after Angus and Minnie were married. I think he had been ordered off by Angus until Angus had given up hope. Then Henry made an elaborate proposal to me, backed by the statement that he was my cousin. The poor, cheap fool! I felt that while my grandfather had been a traitor he never could have been licentious. He had been too fastidious and he hated Indians. I dared Henry to tell the world that his father had been a bastard and his grandmother a harlot, and then to see how long before a man who would tell that sort of thing on his own people would be run out of the community. Well, Henry concluded to keep his mouth shut, but he tormented me in every secret and intangible way he could invent. When he found he couldn't frighten me or bully me he turned to hate me, and swore he'd get even somehow. . . . A sweet, pastoral, village life, eh? And yet the years were busy and successful enough—until America entered the war.

"I was engaged then to Howard Freeman, and very glad to be so. He has a fine scholarly habit of mind and possesses all the idealism that should belong to the born teacher he is. He is amazingly sympathetic and thoughtful. He has all the qualities but one that a woman adores. He lacks virility. And I thought he had that until he evaded the draft."

EVE moistened her lips and stared with unseeing eyes at the children gaping at her from the window ledge. Her face had grown white now and the dark rings beneath her eyes were startling.

"You see"—returning to the jury—"Howard had been anxious to make himself physically fit. He wanted not only to be cured of asthma, which he accomplished the first year he lived in Antelope Basin, but he wanted to be able to compete physically with the men of his age around here. They are pretty fine specimens, you know. He always was talking about what Roosevelt had made of himself. And during his seven years here, Howard made a finished athlete of himself. He was looked up to by the high-school boys. All this I thought spelled virility. I was wrong. It was vanity. For he got excused from active service by pleading his chronic asthma. And his influence was such that he procured a safe desk position in Laramie.

"I felt sick about it, but I hadn't given up the hope that I could make him see things differently, when Major Colbaith came to buy horses.

"Different witnesses here have told about attempts to keep the prices of horses around Antelope Basin within reason. What they haven't told has been my motives for what I said and did. You see, I'd been thinking for many years—perhaps I'd been brooding, really—about what a man actually owes to his country. That group of papers so much cherished by the Duncan family had given a twist to my mind that it otherwise might not have taken. I think without doubt that the information he got from those papers made my father ponder much on the same thing, and his answer was to enlist with the Rough Riders. Undoubtedly he had other reasons. In fact he gave me others and never mentioned the existence of Rob's iron document case. But I know that he must have reached the same conclusion that I did: that loyalty is the very essence of manhood, and that unless a man maintains this quality in relation to his country and to himself, he is poisonous in all his contacts."

Eve's pale face was flushing. Her low voice was lifting and filling the courtroom.

"No one knows, not even my mother, what I suffered during my girlhood from the unhappy position of our family. No one knows what the manner of my father's death did to me. But poignant as it was, this pain was slight compared to the shame, the indignation, the disgust I felt increasingly, year by year, as I thought of the fleeing of one of my race from his great duty. Not that it mattered in itself that England lost Oregon: that was right and inevitable eventually. *But not that way* and through one of my blood. For no matter how we Americans have profited by what he did, he *was a traitor to his country!* And a man who will be a traitor to his race will be disloyal to his marriage vows and to his fellow citizens."

Eve's voice carried to the farthest edge of the crowded room. She spoke with such passion and such pain, that it seemed as if the wriggling children caught some shadow of her agony and for the moment were still.

"I have no apologies to make for the Devonshers. My father tried to make his personal expiation and ended futilely and pitifully with a bullet in his throat from the halfbreed whose horse he had run. I sought to undo the damage Carter Devonsher's illicit life had wrought in Antelope Basin by seeing that we did our full bit as England's ally. I tried—and I am here today.

"When, with all this secret knowledge hounding me, the man to whom I was engaged evaded the draft, a sense that an unchangeable Fate hounded Carter Devonsher's descendants, almost submerged me. But I dared to hope until I found him cheating in horse flesh where he should have been offering his own body. Then something that was not rage, but was akin to it—something too big for me to control—began to burn within me. And it is burning yet. When Minnie Duncan drove me from the Red Cross meeting, it was as if the hand of that same Fate had scourged me forth.

"I made my plans for France. But I had no intention of going to France till I'd fulfilled my obligation to Major Colbaith. He did not know that I felt any obligation. He did not know, does not know yet, what my intention was. But I planned to round up the horses that had been stolen from my stud and sell them to the British Army, giving to the ranchers from whom I took them every cent I received for their sale."

The startling testimony in the next instalment of "The Devonshers" will hold you breathless. Don't miss it! In September EVERYBODY'S, out August 15.

Beginning in September

Crusts

By S. Carleton

THE sight of Charles Calthrop feeding his last crust to a starved dog started the ball rolling for him. Monte Carlo and the hills that overlook it furnish the setting for this unusual story of the people who frequent the felt-topped tables. This two-part serial has mystery, romance, and that subtle something that make it a vivid picture of one of the most famous places in the Mediterranean.

Three Complete Novelettes

It Can't Be Done

By Mabel Dunham Thayer

Penny finds that when an Englishman accepts a dare he is as good as his word—and a little better. A story of buoyant humor and vivacious metropolitan romance.

The Spartan Breed

By Henry Francis Granger

Patricia doubted the pedigree of Daffy, the bulldog, until they coped with kidnapers in the great swamp.

A Runner-up for Providence

By Michael J. Phillips

A match-making mother could not do for her daughter what Bernice did for herself. A story to chuckle over.

September *EVERYBODY'S* Out August 15

First of a New Adventure Series

The Second Time

Volstock, Tramp on Horseback, Cosmopolitan Lover of Chance, Beats a New-World Gambler at His Own Game on the Plains of Argentina

By Arthur Mills

OFTEN in the evening I used to talk to Donato, the old harness-maker, as he sat under the shade of the ombu tree plaiting a lasso.

No one in the estancia knew more of life in Argentina than Donato. He remembered the old pioneer days, before cattle "races" and other modern contrivances for the quick working of cattle—all of which he abominated—were invented. He was now too old for work in the "camp," but that he had been a great horseman and handler of cattle in his day was commonly accepted.

Donato's lassos were famous; peons for miles around came to purchase them. Donato made only one sort; he despised the cheaper kind.

"A man's life may hang on a lasso," he used to say; "they should be made so that they do not break."

For this reason for one lasso he used a complete hide; this, cut carefully round in circles, gave him a strip of leather sufficiently long; the cutting and plaiting took him fourteen days; in the winter months, when the leather was soft, he could work more quickly.

For preserving a lasso he followed the old gaucho recipe, putting the leather in the belly of a newly killed steer and covering it with dung.

In the mornings the old man was best left alone; his liver, I fancy, bothered him. But in the evenings, after he had drunk his maté and as the fragrant smell of the meat roasting for his dinner tickled his nostrils, he grew more genial.

One such evening we were sitting talking of the merits of horses, when, as we talked, I noticed Donato's keen old eyes suddenly fix on something.

Following his glance I saw a stranger approaching, riding a bay horse, or *colorado* (meaning literally "red," in the more precise Spanish stable vocabulary).

"A good horse, that," said Donato, surveying the bay.

I was more interested in the man—a long lean fellow wearing a black sombrero with a purple handkerchief tied round his neck. He carried a *rebenque* with a knob of massive silver; silver *pasadores* studded his breastplate and stirrup leathers. His saddle was piled with sheepskins with a buckskin cover over all.

"What is that fellow?" I asked Donato.

"*Linjero*," answered Donato, shrugging his shoulders.

Now a *linjero* is a tramp upon horseback. Peons out of work ride up to an estancia at sunset and ask the manager for work. If he has work to give them they stay; if not they receive a meal and a night's lodging. Such is the law of the "camp." Idly disposed men may spend many weeks riding from one estancia to another in this fashion.

This fellow hardly looked as though he was an ordinary tramp. I said as much to Donato.

"He has a good horse," said the old man, looking critically at the bay.

The stranger rode up to us; we exchanged greetings; the man proved to be a linjero as Donato had surmised. The giving of work was in the hands of the Major Domo and I left Donato to take the stranger to him.

Next morning I went out soon after dawn to watch some cattle being parted. A foreman and eight peons were on the work. Three peons held up the main herd, another looked after the cattle that had been sorted out, and four, working in pairs, did the actual parting out.

I noticed one of the men working was the tramp of the night before. Evidently the Major Domo had given him work. I watched to see how he did his job and realized at once that he was a first-class man. Only a good horseman is any use for parting cattle; a man must have the control over his horse that a first-class polo player has, and does not always get the polo player's advantage of having a perfectly schooled animal to ride.

The foreman, no doubt purposely to see what sort of man the newcomer was, had given him a young raw colt, and the way he was making the colt do exactly what he wanted was wonderful to watch. Like all the native horsemen of the camp, the linjero was not a gentle rider, the colt's mouth and flanks bled from constant spurring and jobbing on the mouth. However, he was doing the work in two-thirds of the time it would have taken one of the permanent staff of the estancia.

WHILE I was watching, the *capataz* came along on his rounds. The *capataz* of an estancia is the head man over all the peons; he works immediately under the Major Domo. This capataz, whose name was José Rodriguez, was a new man on the estancia, the Major Domo having brought him back from Corrientes a week before. He was a smart-looking fellow, with flashing dark eyes and clean-cut sharp features that bespoke plainly his Spanish blood.

Rodriguez reined his horse alongside me and we exchanged greetings. It was close on seven. The sun, risen more than an hour, grew hot. Behind, a river flowed placidly down to join the mighty Parana; in front, as far as the eye could see, stretched an endless level plain of grass; to our right was the rodeo of fifteen hundred steers; as the peons galloped in and out among them, the low bellowing of the cattle filled the stillness of the air. Rodriguez's keen eyes took in at a glance the progress of the work. A pair of peons were taking out a steer from the heart of the herd; they maneuvered him cleverly to the edge of the rodeo, then riding each side of him, knee to flank, galloped him out between them into the open. With a horseman on each side of him the steer could not turn and willy-nilly was galloping over to the place where the other selected animals were grouped.

The two peons turned and came back. Both men and horses dripped with perspiration. They stopped by Rodriguez and myself and signed to a man to bring them water from the river. As they drew close I saw one of the peons was the linjero of the night before. Despite the dust-clotted perspiration smearing his face, and his skin darkly tanned by the sun, I could see at once that he was no ordinary half-breed camp worker. His eyes were blue, an uncommon color to find among the peons of the northern provinces, and his hands, hard and rough as they were, were delicately made.

José Rodriguez had his back turned as the peons came up and did not look round till a man touched his knee and offered him a drink of water. Lifting the tin with both hands he took a deep draught and passed it to me. I motioned the man to take the tin to the two peons, who both looked as though they needed a drink far more than I did. The linjero took the tin first, but instead of drinking threw the contents over his horse's head and told the man to fill the tin afresh from the river.

Now in the "camp" the codes of politeness expected to be shown are as finely drawn as the rules governing the diplomatic intercourse of the courts of Europe. For an insult the gaucho knows only one answer and he seldom stops to consider whether the insult was intentional or not. By pouring over his horse's head the water the foreman had offered him, the linjero ran very near the wind. I saw Rodriguez's eyes harden as he looked at the stranger. The latter returned his glance blandly. Perhaps after all it was solicitude for his horse's welfare that prompted the tramp's act.

THAT evening I sought out Donato, who would have learnt something more about the tramp, I felt sure. Donato did not fail me.

"He is not of the country like the other peons," Donato said. "He came to Buenos Aires in an immigrant ship a year ago. There are many do that, but they do not often make good cattle men."

I told Donato I thought the linjero knew a good deal about cattle and that he certainly could ride.

"Maybe," answered the old harness maker; "but I do not think the cattle interest him; it is the gambling that he likes; one of the peons saw him at Salto a month ago; he was gambling then and lost a great deal; when he wins he saves nothing; he gives it to the girls; they are like that, the Russians."

"Oh, he is a Russian, is he?"

"Yes, señor; he is Russian; Volstock is his name."

Donato continued: "On Saturday he will be paid. He will go to the *pulpería* and stay until Sunday, you will see."

The week passed. During the intervening days I had work to do and saw no more of Volstock, but when Saturday came, I remembered what Donato had said about the grocery store. Curiosity prompted me to go down.

The pulpería was kept by a man named Gomes, who by selling cheap camp goods at a tremendous profit and the fieriest of *cana* at ten cents a glass, was quickly growing rich. All the peons knew Gomes robbed them and grumbled about it, but his store was the only one for many leagues around and they had no choice. Gomes had also a daughter named Leonita, a young lady possessing considerable attraction.

Half-way there I overtook a solitary horseman, with poncho slung over shoulder and rebenque hitched to his belt, loping over the ground at the easy canter of the camp.

I recognized the bay horse and the heavy silver rebenque at once.

Drawing level with Volstock I exchanged greetings with him and rode along at his side. The Russian showed no inclination to talk and after I had complimented him upon his horse we continued in silence till we came to the pulpería.

GOMES'S establishment was a straggling one-storied building in a grove of paraiso trees; it was divided into two parts; in one-half Gomes lived with his daughter, in the other he kept his store. Considering transport difficulties and the distance he was from a railway station, Gomes's store was remarkably well stocked; in it a man could buy almost anything he was likely to require in the "camp"—saddlery, groceries, bombachos, boots, the bright-colored silk handkerchiefs that every peon loves to fasten around his neck, and of course, cana.

The quality of the cana varied. Gomes had some good enough stuff, made from fine sugar cane and preserved several years in bottle. He had also some cana that was little better than raw alcohol. Which quality a man got depended on how much he had drunk.

It was early when we got to the pulpería, but already several horses were tied to the posts outside.

Volstock unsaddled the bay and took off his bridle, leaving him tied by his halter. I thought at first he might be intending to put the silver-studded bridle and stirrup leathers somewhere safely, but he just threw them on the ground and patting the bay's neck, walked away. The horse turned his head and followed his master with his eyes.

Entering the store, Volstock nodded to Gomes, drew his revolver from his belt and threw it on the counter. Gomes took the revolver and placed it with others on a shelf. Such is the law of the "camp" before a man may be served with liquor. If he is unwilling to give up his arms, he must remain outside the store and drink at an iron-barred window.

Gomes filled two glasses. Volstock lifted his glass and drank its contents at a gulp, drinking immediately afterward a tumbler of cold water. He nodded; Gomes refilled our glasses, and we drank again.

WHILE we stood there Leonita came from the inner room. Her dark eyes fixed immediately on Volstock, and I saw at once that this fair-haired young man had found favor in her quickly impressionable heart.

I was glad not to have a third glass, for, though two seemed to have little effect on Volstock, they were quite enough for me. However, Volstock had evidently a settled plan. The score being paid he collected his revolver and walked out of the store, and headed for an open space among the paraiso trees where a group of men were gathered.

The men squatted in a row on the ground. In the center a man sat at a table, improvised out of an old packing case. In front of this the ground was marked out by two lines traced some twenty yards apart. A man toed one of these lines, holding in his hand a curiously-shaped bone flattened off at top and bottom and faced with iron. Balancing himself carefully, he threw the bone in the air, giving a twist with his wrist which imparted a backward spin to it. The bone fell on the other side of the line some twenty yards away.

"*Suerte!*" called a voice.

"*Suerte!*" echoed the watching peons, bending forward.

The thrower came to the man sitting at the packing case, who pushed some silver toward him which he counted and put in his pocket.

Volstock now advanced, opened a pouch in his belt, and threw four dollars down on the packing case. The man who had just thrown covered the money with a like amount.

VOLSTOCK took the *taba*, as the bone is called, and toed the line. Measuring the distance carefully with his eye, he pitched.

"*Cola,*" called a voice.

This time the bone had fallen with the plain surface uppermost. To win, it was necessary to make the taba fall with the suerte or *S*-shaped surface to the sky.

Volstock's opponent took the taba and threw. He, too, failed to get a suerte. Volstock walked to the packing case and put down four more dollars. His opponent covered the money. Both men threw again. This time Volstock won.

Obviously discomfited, the loser walked away and sat down at the end of the row of watching peons. Volstock remained standing; he left the silver dollars where they lay upon the box.

"Sixteen dollars on the box," called out the man behind the packing case, who appeared to be a sort of referee and general manager of the game.

No one came forward. Sixteen dollars was a large sum for an ordinary working peon to provide. Also, Volstock was a stranger and they were nervous of him.

"Sixteen dollars on the box," repeated the referee.

I watched Volstock closely. His face was expressionless; his blue eyes traveled slowly up and down the row of waiting peons. He had the impassivity, the complete control of his excitement of a born gambler. I wondered what his history was. The immigrant ships bring all manner of men to the Argentine. There was a straightness in his bearing, something in the way he sat a horse, that suggested he might have been in the cavalry—an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard, perhaps, for all any of us knew. In the "camp" in South America what a man has been is not the business of his fellows.

"Sixteen dollars on the box," repeated the referee in a tone of finality. As there was still no reply he motioned to Volstock to pick up his money.

AT THIS moment, just as Volstock was bending down to collect his winnings, a man strolled over from the pulpería. He was better dressed than the others, wearing great clinking silver spurs and top boots of glossy black patent leather. A rebenque, silver-mounted, on which his initials were embossed in gold, swung from his wrist. His black mustachios, curling upward from his lips, gave him a slightly arrogant air.

The other peons looked at him expectantly. Everybody knew José Rodriguez, capataz of Estancia Fontana. He would certainly throw the taba against the stranger for sixteen dollars or any sum he cared to name.

Volstock looked at him. I felt again vaguely from the way these two men eyed each other that they had met somewhere before. Yet neither, when they came face to face, showed the slightest sign of mutual recognition.

"The stake is too high, perhaps," said Volstock quietly.

The remark was made to the air, but it was plain for whom it was intended. Again, as when he had thrown the water over his horse's head, I wondered if Volstock meant deliberate insult. In the camp a man does not say such things to another in such a way.

Rodriguez smiled. "The stake!" he repeated, peering at the money as though it was too small an amount to see.

Volstock felt in his belt and counted out another two dollars. If he is really a tramp, I thought, where does he get all his money? The same idea must have struck Rodriguez, for his expression betrayed his surprise. Volstock again put his hand in his pocket, but Rodriguez, before the stake could be increased again, hastily covered the amount on the box.

It is a debatable matter what proportion of luck and what of skill there is in taba, but certainly skill counts. Rodriguez as the last comer had the right to throw first. It was evident, from the way he made the bone fall, that he was an adept at the game. He pitched the taba high in the air so that it came down almost perpendicularly, falling at last with a sudden thwack on the sandy soil.

Volstock also scored a Cola and the game remained unchanged. Now when both sides fail to score it is a matter of mutual arrangement between the players whether the stake is increased or they throw for the same amount again.

Rodriguez walked over to the box and put down a handful of silver.

Volstock covered the amount.

Again the men threw, this time Volstock having the first turn. First he carefully dried his hand by rubbing it on the warm sand, then measuring the distance took up his position. News that high gambling was taking place had spread to the pulpería and all the peons had come out to watch. Some were already under the influence of cana; all were excited; side bets between the spectators were made freely.

The taba left Volstock's hand.

"Suerte! Suerte!" cried his supporters.

"Cola! Cola!" came the answer from Rodriguez's men.

Thump! The weighted bone fell. From where I stood I could see the faint outline of the *S* uppermost.

VOLSTOCK'S supporters applauded delightedly. He had thrown a suerte; Rodriguez must now do likewise or he would lose his money.

The Spaniard advanced, took the bone and threw. The taba was pitched beautifully, but kicked on landing and lay on its side. Volstock had won the coup.

Rodriguez was plainly irritated. He unhitched his rebenque from his belt, pitched it on the sand by the box, and looked inquiringly at Volstock.

Volstock nodded. He had seen the rebenque with its solid silver handle, inlaid with gold; it was undoubtedly valuable and Rodriguez was welcome to stake it against the money on the box.

It was now Rodriguez's turn to throw. This time he made no mistake. The taba left his hand, made half a dozen circles in the air, and lay fair and square with the *S* uppermost.

Volstock had to throw a suerte too or lose not only the money he had won, but also all he had originally staked. My sympathies were all with the stranger; the sympathies of the crowd, clearly with the capataz—except in one case, for Leonita had now joined the spectators and from the expression in her eyes as they traveled from one player to another, it was plain which man she wished to win.

Volstock pitched.

"Cola! Cola!" a man called excitedly, almost before the taba had fallen.

COLA it was. Volstock had lost. He walked quietly over to where he had left his saddlery and came back with his silver-studded stirrup leathers and bridle; these, with his rebenque, which had as finely worked a handle as Rodriguez's, he threw on to the ground.

Rodriguez nodded and Volstock took the taba.

Again he threw and again the cry "Cola! Cola!" fell on my dismayed ears. This young Russian was undoubtedly, as old Donato said, a gambler.

A smile played about the lips of Rodriguez as he took the taba in his turn and threw it, with apparently the utmost ease, so that the *S* lay uppermost.

Volstock pointed to his saddle with its new sheepskins and beautiful leather work. Again Rodriguez nodded and took the taba. Some instinct told me that Volstock's luck had gone. Though outwardly as calm as ever, I could see a look in his eyes that suggested he knew it, too.

The two men threw once again. Volstock lost. It was over; he had nothing left to gamble with. Rodriguez bent down to collect his winnings.

"One moment!" Volstock called. "I would like another throw."

"And the stake?" inquired Rodriguez insolently.

Volstock pointed to the bay horse under the tree.

Even Rodriguez was taken aback. In the camp a man's horse is the last of the possessions with which he will part. His horse stands for more than mere money; it stands for his self-respect; his whole prestige. In this country where the word for gentleman is *caballero* (horseman), where even the poorest peon in the humblest ranchito rides everywhere as a matter of course, a man who has no horse is held to be in a bad way indeed.

"I will throw you for my horse," said Volstock quietly. "If I win the throw you will give me yours as well; mine is worth two of him."

"*El colorado! . . . El colorado!*" murmured the peons.

Rodriguez as a capataz had several horses. For him the loss of one of these did not mean a great deal. There were, however, the two rebenques, the silver-mounted saddlery, and the money. He went over and examined the bay, opening his mouth, running a knowing hand down his withers.

I could have sworn the bay knew what was happening, for he shivered at the Spaniard's touch.

"Very well," said Rodriguez. "The first throw is with you."

A DEAD silence had now fallen on the audience. Rodriguez's hand shook a little as he rolled a cigarette; his cheeks seemed pinched. My own heart beat fast. Volstock alone seemed utterly unmoved; he even smiled as he rubbed some loose sand on the surface of the taba.

Bending slightly forward, he looked a long time at the place where he meant the taba to fall. At last he pitched. A second's silence and then a voice cried:

"Cola!"

My heart beat fast. Again the Russian had missed.

Volstock crossed over, picked up the taba and handed it politely to Rodriguez. As he withdrew I noticed Leonita placing herself beside him; I saw her put her hand on his arm, and it seemed she said something in his ear. The Russian listened, his face expressionless.

Opinion had now veered round in favor of the Russian; it was a hundred to one against the Spaniard throwing three suertes in succession.

Hitherto, after he had had his own throw, Volstock had walked away, sometimes even turning his back on the game. But now he went on one side of the pitch and stood half facing Rodriguez.

Rodriguez prepared himself, placing his left foot on the line, his right leg drawn back, eyes fixed straight in front of him.

Very slowly Rodriguez brought his right arm backward. A dead silence hung upon the company. On the issue of the next few seconds hung horse, saddlery, silver, everything that a man possessed.

One fleeting vision of Leonita's face, white and tense, her eyes fixed on the Spaniard—an impression that her head gave the slightest nod, then Rodriguez's arm began the downward swing.

SUDDENLY there was a flash, the sharp crack of a shot, and Rodriguez pitched forward on his face.

Volstock stood still, smoking revolver in his hand. His eye swept the watching peons and the revolver was lifted, ready to cover the first man that raised his hand.

"Look upon the ground!" he said quietly. "There are two tabas there! That one he has just dropped from his hand is weighted. Try, any one of you, to throw it; it will always fall the same way, with the suerte in the air."

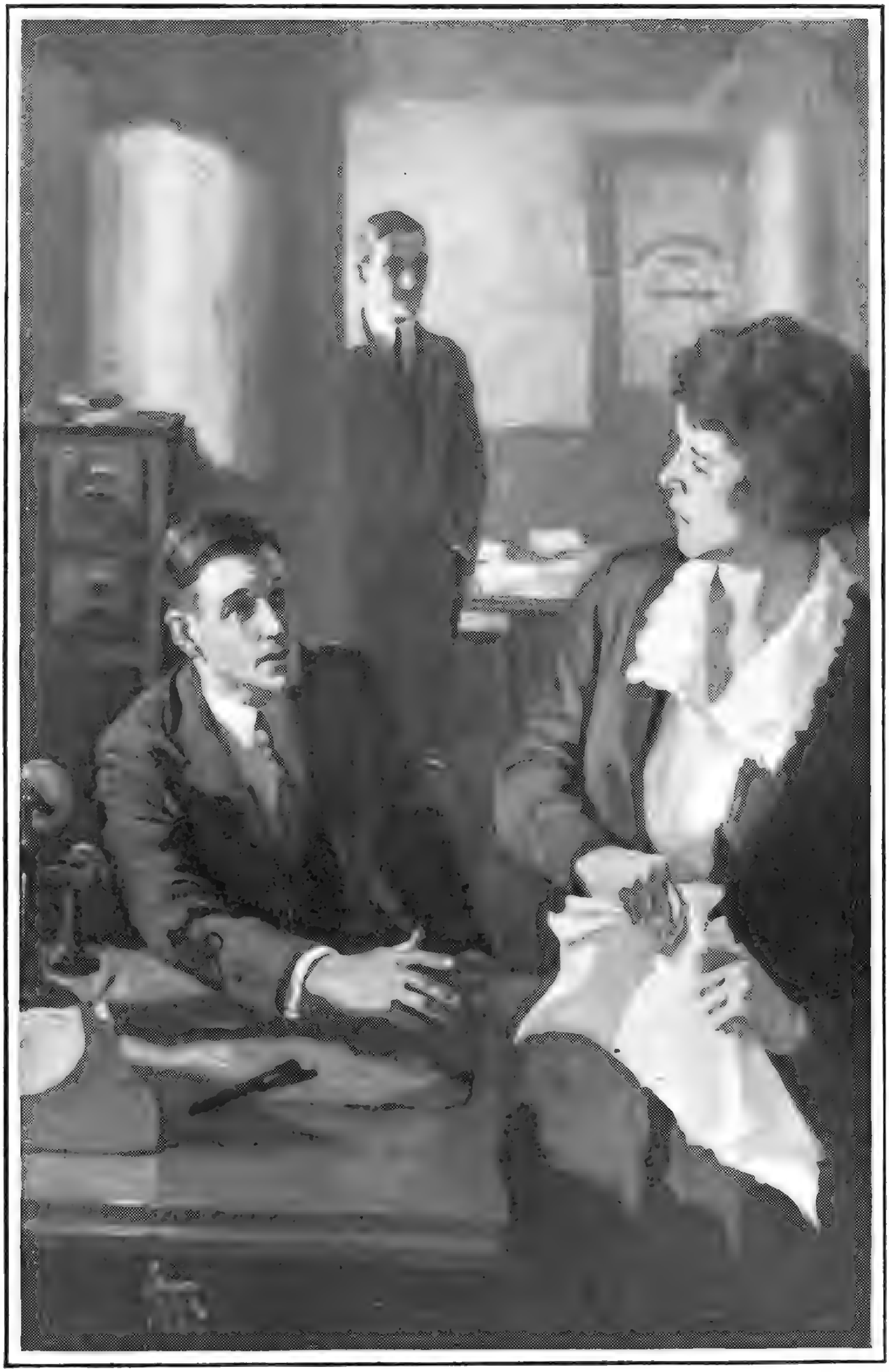
And when we examined the taba it was as Volstock had said. Which really ends the story, for a man may not throw a weighted taba anywhere in the northern Argentine against his fellows, except he is prepared to lose his life.

That evening Volstock saddled the bay mare and rode out again into the plains.

Old Donato, with whom I talked of the matter, said:

"You say they seemed to know one another, señor. Maybe it was so. I have heard Rodriguez talk of great gaming at a place in France. This Russian, too, has gambled much in Europe. Rodriguez, I know, was shifty, but perhaps the first time he was able to escape."

The second venture of the tramp on horseback will be in a kind of horse race few Americans know. Look for "Vamos" in September EVERYBODY'S, out August 15.



She began desperately to tear the paper before Raymer could stop her. "I don't care!" she said. "You're a miserable little rat! Don't touch me!"

Or Not at All

A Pleasing Mixture of Business and Love. The Man Who Always Played Safe

By Robert Simpson

Illustration by H. T. Fisk

IT WAS natural for Raymer to assume, because he always did things right, that he always did the right thing.

The proximity of a prison to the scene of his daily labors may have helped to distort his point of view, but, as a matter of fact, the Tombs and Raymer had but the merest nodding acquaintance with each other. While the Tombs was the temporary home of those who had done the wrong thing at the wrong time, Raymer was the citadel of a spirit that always did things right—or not at all.

His position with Merril, Gifford & Craik, Inc., valve manufacturers, Lafayette Street, New York, ultimately was going to be that of treasurer—probably vice-president, if not president. Just at present he was twenty-seven and cashier, which fitted him as perfectly as his clothes, and his record with the firm was as spotless as a Monday-morning collar.

Therefore Raymer's view of the future was the right view, inasmuch as he obeyed to the letter the injunction to look up and not down, and his gift of looking ahead was second only to his settled belief in what he was going to see around the corner.

Oddly enough, this did not make Raymer a snob or a shining example. Even Peter Diller, the stock clerk, admitted this, and the only thing Peter and Raymer finally managed to agree upon was Barbara, who at once suggested to the casual observer a cottage in the country, a shampoo advertisement, and a just cause for battle.

Barbara Grant was nineteen when Orden, then the treasurer of the company, put her in the same cage with Raymer and requested her to perform for the benefit of the debtors and creditors and the permanent audience that was paid every Saturday morning to see how she did it.

It was no trouble at all for Barbara to be popular. She was one of those rare and blessed spirits who ask nothing, expect little and receive much. So that, several months after she had entered the employ of the company, it was only natural that she should fall heir to the job of going around the office and salesroom with a subscription sheet, to collect subscriptions for the latest office wedding present.

When she reached the stock room, Peter Diller stopped checking up and got down from his high stool, glancing alternately at Barbara and the well-filled subscription sheet she held in her hand.

Peter, according to the Raymer standard, was not an ambitious young man. If he looked ahead at all, it was only as far as Saturday morning, and vaguely perhaps, to the time when he would get his chance, as former stock clerks had done, to go out on the road.

Meantime, he got out of life whatever he could with what he happened to have; and just then he did not happen to have very much; something in the vicinity of a dollar and forty cents. Whoever was going to get married had chosen the wrong moment as far as Peter was concerned.

"What is it?" Peter asked unnecessarily, glancing again at the subscription sheet.

"Miss Fulton is getting married and—"

"How much?"

"Whatever you can." And Barbara smiled. "You don't have to give anything if you don't want to."

Peter mechanically held out his hand for the sheet, glanced down the list of names and the amounts, looked at Barbara again as if to be quite sure she was worth it, then produced a rather crumpled dollar bill.

"Oh, thank you! That's fine!"

Peter hoped it was as he handed the dollar over. He knew perfectly well he was doing it just to make an impression on the girl—to hear her thank him and see her smile just as she was doing then—and for no more generous or less selfish reason than that.

But the effect was intended for Barbara only. The delivery boy from a hardware store, who stood at the counter no great distance away, and the assistant shipping clerk who fussed with an unopened case in the middle of the stock-room floor, had no place in Peter's thoughts. If anything, he hoped nobody would notice what a nut he had been.

Barbara, however, was not the kind of collector who pauses for any effect. She added his name to the list, wrote $1.00 in the money column, smiled and hurried off to the next victim as if she were afraid Peter might change his mind.

But Peter did not change his mind, then or later.

BARBARA returned to the cage to place before Raymer, the custodian of the cash, the result of her first attempt at larceny with the consent of the robbed. And Raymer said generously, when he had added it all up: "Great! And without a blackjack, too. You're hired in perpetuity for this job."

Barbara laughed. She liked Raymer to approve of her.

"That won't make them like me very much, will it?" she asked dubiously. "They'll probably get into the habit of ducking when they see me coming."

"Never," Raymer assured her gallantly. "Now, what shall we put us down for?"

Barbara liked this, too. Of late, Raymer had been using "we" in just that way quite often, as if a kind of partnership had been established between them.

"Fifty cents for me," Barbara said unblushingly.

"All right. Now, let's see." Raymer cast his eye down the list, and found donations ranging from twenty-five cents to five dollars, the latter amount being that generally received from the several department heads. "Fifty cents, did you say? Fine! Miss Fulton's a nice girl. We'll put the cage down for five dollars and call it square."

And with a gesture which Barbara could not help but think magnificent, he scribbled, "The cage—$5.00," at the foot of the subscription list, took a five-dollar bill from his wallet and added it to the heap of bills at his elbow.

"But that isn't fair," Barbara protested. "I'm giving only fifty cents of it and you've written—"

"That's all right"—soothingly, and with the smile of a man who, in doing things right, does not expect much if any help from any one. "You're not expected to do any more than that."

"But—"

"And don't forget you owe me fifty cents," Raymer reminded her with mock severity, and pretended not to observe that the gallery of Barbara's deep brown eyes was giving him its usual applause.

Barbara brought him the fifty cents and put it into the cup of his hand.

"I don't think it's fair, just the same," she insisted stubbornly.

Raymer laughed, dropped the coin absently into his vest pocket, instead of into his trousers pocket with the rest of his change, then strolled to the window of the cage to attend to a salesman who was presenting an expense slip.

Barbara's eyes held a rather frightened look. She knew that Raymer did not keep loose change in the same pocket as his watch, and for a minute or so after she went back to her desk, she worried a little about the probability of the fifty-cent piece scratching the watch-case, and wondered if she ought to tell him about it.

Then she knew she did not want to tell him; that she did not want him ever to spend that fifty cents. And some day when they were quite old, and he was sitting in the luxuriously upholstered armchair on the other side of the open fireplace in the big living-room of their white stuccoed house on Long Island Sound, she would see him fumbling with his finger and thumb in that vest pocket—not the same vest, of course—and she would go on crocheting just as if she didn't know anything about it; just as she was pretending to be interested in vouchers then!

IN THE succeeding six months, among other things of no particular consequence, Peter Diller ambled out of the stock room into the sales department, and did not amble back again. Instead, he proceeded to discover that a valve, in addition to being just a valve, had a kind of aura of selling points more or less invisible in the stock room, but clearly discernible in the sales department.

Peter also discovered that the sales department called Barbara just Barbara, so he quite naturally acquired the habit; and as there was no such personage about the place as "Mr. Diller," Barbara was forced to call him Peter to make herself understood.

Barbara liked Peter, and Peter had no difficulty in confessing to himself that he was just crazy about Barbara. Some day when he was out on the road and making real money . . .

But it was Raymer who moved first.

This happened when Raymer was allowed to escape from the cage and pass on to a small, brass-railed enclosure containing three desks, and a brass desk-plate which said simply but sufficiently—AUDITOR.

The desk-plate meant Raymer, and because he did not take Barbara out of the cage with him, the break created a perfectly legitimate excuse for inviting Barbara out to dinner and the theater, ostensibly to celebrate Raymer's promotion, and in a sense to bemoan the parting of the ways.

A taxi carried them to a restaurant where the appetizer was preceded by a cover charge. Another taxi took them to the theater where they saw the play from the fourth row, and yet another taxi trundled them home. There was no after-theater supper only because Barbara, shuddering at Raymer's adorable extravagance on her account, secretly thought the evening late and expensive enough as it was.

And it was in the third taxi that Raymer quietly produced a fifty-cent piece from his vest pocket and held it between his finger and thumb so that Barbara could see it quite plainly.

Barbara's heart missed a beat. She had had a wonderful and altogether dazzling evening, so dazzling that she hardly believed it yet, and when she saw the fifty-cent piece and lifted her eyes in a kind of gasping interrogation to meet Raymer's, she straightway passed into a fog that did not lift even when Raymer's arm was at last resting quietly about her shoulders and he was saying simply enough:

"You see, Barbara, I always do things right, and I can't think of anything more just right than you. It's all settled, isn't it, dear? You're quite sure you won't change your mind?"

Barbara laughed, shuddered a little, and gripped Raymer's free hand—the one that held the fifty-cent piece—with both of hers.

"I hope—I hope it hasn't scratched your watch-case," she said in an anxious whisper. "I've been worried about that."

IT WAS several days before Barbara really admitted to herself that it was true, and she was glad Raymer had decided they had better say nothing about it at the office. She agreed with him that long engagements between people working in the same office were, to the other people in the office, the most tiresome things imaginable. And this, of necessity, was going to be an engagement that would last at least two years, perhaps three.

Raymer had it all added up, red-lined and audited O.K. He knew just what kind of ring he wanted Barbara to have, just the kind of apartment he wanted them to move into, just the kind of furniture he wanted in each room, and just the kind of honeymoon they were to have if they did things right. And, of course, there was no sense in getting married any other way.

"I don't understand how people who are settling down in life can possibly rush slipshod into it, the way some of them do," he told Barbara as they left the office together and walked across town to the Sixth Avenue "L" one Saturday afternoon a month or so after they had agreed to understand each other so well. "It isn't going to last a week or a month or a year. It's going to last till we die. Seems to me that's the one time to do things as right as they possibly can be done."

"Yes, of course," Barbara agreed, watching a truckman dig a hook savagely into a case on the sidewalk, "I think so, too."

"And naturally, that kind of thing takes time and money. But it'll be worth waiting for. The things that come easily aren't worth a hoot, anyway."

Barbara did not believe they were, either. She was twenty then, and two or three years, particularly since she had just had a raise, was not very long. Besides, she liked the pictures Raymer painted: the ring and the apartment and the furniture and the honeymoon—everything.

So she stepped out into the first year of waiting with firm, sure, confident steps that did not falter in the least, strong in the belief that doing things right was the right thing to do.

Occasionally—very occasionally—Raymer took her out to dinner and the theater just as extravagantly as he had done the first time; twice, during the baseball season, they taxied up to a box at the Polo Grounds, and when he took her down to the beach, or to Forest Hills to see some championship tennis, or to Montclair to follow two golf stars to the last putt, these things were labeled "Events," and Barbara found it incumbent upon her to do fitting honor to the occasion.

OF COURSE, the office began to have its suspicions. Offices always do. This included Peter Diller, who just shrugged his shoulders and watched and waited and accepted his envelope from Barbara every Saturday morning, just as if the envelope mattered.

The first year was not as long as Barbara expected it to be. It was too new and exciting. But the second, for some reason or other, had a tendency to drag, more particularly on those scattered occasions when she went around the office with a sheet of foolscap in her hand, seeking subscriptions.

But it was one of these occasions that marked another milestone in the life of one Peter Diller.

To the rest of the office this particular afternoon meant nothing more than the usual routine, plus another of Barbara's raids. To Peter, it meant the firm's calling card with his name on it.

When Barbara reached his desk, he was just recovering from a fifteen-minute talk with Franklin, the sales manager, but he saw the girl veering toward him long before she shook the sheet of foolscap at him.

"This is where I should take all the money you've got, Peter," she told him. "But I'll let you off with a dollar as usual. Then you'll be sure I mean it when I say 'Congratulations!' "

She held out her right hand palm down.

Peter took it rather shakily. That she should be the first to congratulate him made him blink inside and out. He was sure he was going to become sentimental if he were not careful.

"How did you know?" he asked blankly, and drew his hand away as if he were afraid of being seen.

"Mr. Franklin just whispered it to me in the interests of my business. He said you ought to be good for five dollars right this minute. But I won't be that mean. One dollar, please."

Peter paid it, watching her face more greedily than he knew.

"Who is it, this time?"

"Miss Ellerton."

"I—it'll be you next, I suppose?"

Barbara laughed. The second year was nearly up.

"Oh, no! Not I. Not for a long time yet."

Peter grinned hopefully. "Well, you won't be able to hold me up when I'm out on the road."

"Yes, I will. I'll do it by mail."

"Will you?"—eagerly.

Barbara's eyes popped wide, and Peter knew that he had taken a step too much—or too little, he was not sure which. He swung abruptly toward his desk, with a short laugh.

"Well, don't *you* dare to get married when I'm not around."

Barbara laughed, too, and moved away sideways. "All right. I'll promise—maybe."

And then she was gone in the general direction of the auditing department.

As she approached Raymer's desk some time later, she thought his smile was a trifle strained, and he glanced at the sheet of foolscap rather perfunctorily. When he handed it back to her, together with his customary donation as a department head, he asked casually, "What were you shaking hands with Diller about?"

"Oh, did you see me?"

"Just happened to, in passing. You

were both too busy to pay any attention to me. I thought it looked—well, unnecessary, that was all. And he didn't give very much, did he, in spite of the fuss you made over him?"

Barbara's smile was completely wiped out. One of Rayner's assistants saw her mouth become a determined little line as she stooped over Raymer's desk to write his name on the sheet. And, obviously, Raymer did not like this simple, voiceless way of suggesting that the discussion was closed. In fact, it startled him not a little. He had found Barbara astonishingly easy to get along with.

"What were you shaking hands with him about?" he persisted in a low, even voice when she straightened up again.

Barbara's upward glance was quiet, but Raymer, who was holding himself well enough in check, was surprised to find that a brown eye—particularly a soft, womanly brown eye like Barbara's—could become so hard.

"Ask Mr. Franklin," she said simply. "The secret, if it is one, is his, not mine."

They did not leave the office together that evening.

RAYMER, of course, would not stoop to seeking information from the sales manager. Neither did he again interrogate Barbara. He did not have to. Peter Diller started on his first road trip the following Monday, carrying with him just the faintest of office rumors that Raymer and Barbara had quarreled.

But they had made up again before he returned. Raymer swallowed rather hard in the process, but his intentions being genuine and good, he finally managed to bring the brown of Barbara's eyes back to normal; after which they had one of those long and serious talks which always follow a row between two people as sensible as Raymer was and Barbara was having some difficulty in being as she grew older.

In the past year, Raymer had discovered two things; that his ideas about doing things had not been quite right enough; and that an auditorship with Merril, Gifford & Craik, Incorporated, was one of the jobs in which a man remains until some one higher up dies. And Orden, the company's treasurer, clearly had no intention of doing that for many years to come.

Thus, the combination of an increase in the cost of doing things more right than ever, and a state of stagnation, created, in Raymer's mind at least, a most pressing need for an extension of time.

So he thrashed the thing out with Barbara on a bench in Central Park on a Saturday afternoon which Barbara might have spent at the beach with some chums of hers who had a degrading weakness for sand and ice-cream cones in summer, and waffles and cut-rate theater tickets in winter.

But Barbara listened attentively enough. She knew it was not right to be impatient; that Rome was not built in a day; that if you build the foundation of your house carefully and solidly and well, it will stand the shocks of age and circumstance so very much better than if you don't. Barbara was still too sensible to argue with Raymer when he talked like that.

"We're young yet," he said encouragingly. "And you are eight years younger than I am. Mighty few girls nowadays get married before they are twenty-five."

Barbara knew this, too. And though she did not look deliberately at her left hand as she mentally calculated the difference between twenty-two and twenty-five, she could not help seeing there was no ring there, and Raymer seemed to observe the fact as well.

"You can have a ring if you want one, dear," he assured her, and with an altogether subconscious air of munificence. "But you know what a fuss they'd make at the office. After a while they would begin to get on our nerves, just as we'd be sure to get on theirs, and you know how I would hate the cheap humor fellows like Bailey and Cartwright would indulge in if we didn't get married fast enough to suit them. And Miss Croach! Can't you hear her?"

Barbara could, and laughed and, at the same time, shuddered a little.

WHEN Peter Diller came in at the end of his fourth road trip and found Barbara still canceling his expense slips, he watched her count out the money due him—the set of her mouth particularly—and suggested, with the assurance which four road trips had given him, "I'll marry you myself if you don't hurry up."

Barbara looked up quickly, saw that Peter was perfectly serious in spite of his smile, then laughed because it was the only thing to do.

"Oh, I'm in no hurry."

"No?" A pause. Then in a confidential monotone: "What's the matter with Raymer, anyway?"

"Raymer?" She pushed the money through the window at Peter with a steady hand and with a calm that clearly marked the difference between nineteen and rather more than twenty-three years. "Why? Is there anything the matter with him?"

"Hunh!" Peter counted the money very carefully to give him an excuse for standing there. "What's he waiting for? Nothing to do but stay home and—"

"Perhaps you'd better discuss it with Mr. Raymer, who probably knows more about it."

She walked abruptly away from the window toward her desk, but as Peter picked up the money and stuffed it into his pocket he saw her left hand—the one nearer to him—clench slightly; and he was careful to note that her head was lifted to a stiff and unusually prideful height.

And after that, though Peter had no means of knowing it, Barbara's time of waiting seemed to be measured by the length of his road trips. Not because she anticipated, with any pleasure, Peter's return at the end of each trip, but because she came to dread his appearance at the cage window, as she might have done a periodical pronouncement of doom.

Even when Peter said nothing, she knew that he knew; and nothing Miss Croach, the office gossip, had said or was likely to say, affected Barbara quite as definitely as the appearance of Peter Diller's round, good-humored face at the cage window just once every three or four months.

PETER had a kindly, sympathetic eye. For three trips in succession Peter's tongue said nothing that mattered, but his eyes, without intending to give that impression, were terribly sorry for her.

It was when he came in after his eighth trip that he looked different. Barbara saw him in the outer office before he came up to the cage, and noted that he seemed to be having a lot to say to Franklin, the sales manager, who seemed to have just as much to say to him. When she saw him approaching the cage window, she pretended not to notice, but when she walked over to the window, her knees were shaking.

Perhaps the circumstance that, just a week before, she had celebrated her twenty-fifth birthday had something to do with it; and another long and serious talk with Raymer the previous evening probably helped. Raymer had thought that, in view of certain definite changes of policy which the president of the firm was then considering, it would be advisable to wait perhaps one more year—at least, till after Christmas before they officially announced their engagement.

"Hello, Peter. I'm glad to see you again. Want some money?"

She thought her voice shrilled, and she knew it must sound unnecessarily cheerful. Peter hardly heard it. And at the same time he saw the shrinking look in her eyes, she observed that Peter had something to say and was going to say it whether she liked it or not.

He pushed an expense slip in her direction. "Want to help me celebrate?"

"Celebrate? Why?"

"They're giving me Anderson's territory, and that'll let me stay home nights like a regular husband."

"Wh-why, Peter! You never told me you were married!"

"I'm not. But if you'll come out to dinner with me to-night we can fix it up all right. Will you?"

"Me—I mean—I?" Barbara laughed, and Peter heard the hysterical note in it quite plainly.

Then Miss Croach came up to the window to ask Barbara about a C.O.D. item that had not been collected, and lingered to discuss the matter in full and complete detail for several minutes, explaining to Peter the whole transaction from the receipt of the order by telephone to the return of the delivery boy. Peter was not interested, but Barbara, for once in her life, encouraged Miss Croach as much as possible until even that wordy lady felt that she had done ample justice to the matter, and left it to rest in Barbara's hands, satisfied that there was nothing more to be said about it; not even a syllable.

Then, just as Miss Croach was leaving, there came an office boy in pursuit of carfare, then a clerk from the book-keeping department. When they had both gone, Peter sighed thankfully and said: "You've had a lot of time to make up your mind. And it must be pretty nearly seven years since I gave you a dollar to make you think I'd be a generous husband. Will I come up to the house to get you, or will you meet me downtown?"

"I'm sorry, Peter. But I have an engagement this evening."

"Then to-morrow—"

"And to-morrow evening, too."

"And the next and the next and the next? Hunh! All right. But whenever you feel like changing your mind—well, they're giving me Anderson's territory. So you know what to expect."

"Oh, I won't mind, if you won't."

But Barbara did mind. Instead of seeing Peter every few months, she saw him now every Saturday morning. And every Saturday morning, whether he said anything or not, Barbara knew that he was just waiting for her to realize that, however genuine Raymer's intentions were, there was something seriously wrong with the quality of Raymer's enthusiasm.

And then there came the evening when Raymer took her unexpectedly out to dinner.

That was not like him. She had learned that he never did anything unexpectedly. He never sent her flowers she could not anticipate at least a week in advance, never took her anywhere she had not heard about a month before it happened, never surprised her on an "off night" by calling for her to take her to a picture or a play or anything "just for fun," and never even kissed her except at measured intervals that kept better time than her wrist watch.

Consequently this was an evening to be remembered, particularly since they dined in a place that suited Barbara's mood, but for which Raymer seemed to think he ought to apologize. Christmas was only a week or so away, and he explained, with a smile that promised something unusual, he was saving up for that.

They had reach the dessert when the real truth came out.

"I suppose you heard about the new issue of stock the firm is making?" he asked, just as the restaurant orchestra struck into a popular waltz which was always played in the motion-picture houses to agree with the emotions of the heroine who was sitting on the old tree stump waiting for the hero to come back.

"No. Is that one of the definite changes of policy you told me about some time ago?"

Raymer's lips drew together in a way they had when he was going to be more sensible than usual.

"Exactly. And for us, situated as we are, it's the opportunity of a lifetime."

"Why?"

"Because we, as employees, are going to be given the first chance to subscribe. We become a part of the firm. I don't think I need to explain to you what that means to me, and therefore to us."

Barbara did not look as if she were very sure about it, so he went on to elucidate. The stock, of course, was an excellent investment. Nobody, not even Barbara, would think of questioning that; and, of course, the more he, Raymer, could buy, the sounder and surer would be his position and prestige with the firm.

"That's why I thought I ought to talk to you about it," he continued seriously, "because, of course, everything I've got is really ours, and I'd like to feel that we were together in this thing."

BARBARA was thankful that the waiter interrupted with the coffee at that juncture. It gave her time to think and also to swallow an impulsive question which, on second thought, was better left unvoiced. So when the waiter departed, she managed to smile across at Raymer and ask in a voice that was almost normal, "You mean you would like to subscribe for as much of this stock as possible and—and we'd wait until —until—"

"Until I managed to get enough together again to let us start in real earnest," Raymer finished readily. "It's a wonderful chance, Barbara. Orden was telling me today—"

And he went on to explain in greater detail just what a wonderful chance Orden, the treasurer, had said it was.

Barbara's eyes were on Raymer, but the face she saw was a round and good-humored one, and the sound she heard was the restaurant orchestra playing the waltz over again. She knew it was maudlin to want to cry, and that it was altogether improper to want to throw the coffee in Raymer's face, but she had to conquer both these impulses while Raymer talked, his voice droning on interminably, as it seemed to her, painting pictures that were covered with figures and ruled with red lines. Then, quite suddenly, she pushed the coffee cup away from her.

"Let's get out of here. Either the smoke or—or something—"

She never quite knew how she reached the street. But she wanted air and lots of it, and, more than anything, a chance to get away from Raymer's voice and figures. He offered to call a taxi.

"No. I'd prefer the 'L.' It's cooler"—which, of course was ridiculous in December—"and there are more people and"—she laughed so that a passer-by turned and looked at her—"it only costs a nickel."

Raymer, who was doing his best to be patient with an unusual mood, frowned slightly.

"I'm afraid I don't understand," he said simply. "I never knew you to go on like this before."

Barbara steadied a little, linked her arm boisterously in Raymer's and led him up the street.

"It's all right. I'm just tired, I guess. Better take me home before I start tearing up Forty-second Street with my teeth."

So Raymer took her home. And when he had rather dubiously kissed her good night, and was walking toward the 'L' again, he was somewhat of the opinion that she did not have his best interests at heart. Certainly, she did not take the firm's new issue of stock seriously enough.

Barbara, on the other hand, did not cry herself to sleep.

But she did put her fingers in her ears.

THE following day the several department heads of Merril, Gifford & Craik, Incorporated, were called into conference, and they in turn explained to their assistants the opportunity the firm was putting in the way of every employee from the office boys up. So that the excitement, for every one save Barbara, was intense, particularly since the stock could be paid for on the instalment plan if the buyer preferred or was compelled to take it that way.

The time of the year—Christmas week—was that in which all of the salesmen came in and lingered about the place day after day, making preparations to go out again after the first of the year. The majority of them spent most of their time at matinées or in Christmas shopping with their wives, but Peter Diller, who did not have a wife, and did not seem to have any Christmas shopping to do, just hung around as a daily reminder to Barbara that he was ready to marry her at the drop of the hat.

And every evening, Raymer walked across town with her to impress upon her how vital it was to his future and hers that he buy as much of the new issue of stock as he possibly could. He did not say how much and she did not ask. That week was a kind of dull gray haze to her; not unlike Lafayette Street itself the day before Christmas—the day on which Barbara once more passed around the office and salesroom with a double sheet of foolscap in her hand.

On this occasion, her task was largely mechanical, and it fell to her in just that way, because she had always done it. The double sheet was filled with typewritten names, and as the several heads of the departments had already done most of her canvassing for her, all she had to do was to fill in the amounts.

Some of these amounts would have astonished her if she had been paying strict attention to the figures. But, all the while, in the back of her mind, she was thinking of the first time she had gone around the office with a subscription sheet—the one for Miss Fulton's wedding present—and of a certain fifty-cent piece that had romantically wound up the performance.

And this time, she was going around the office with another subscription sheet; an entirely different kind of subscription sheet that was going to make it wholly unnecessary for any one to subscribe for a wedding present for her. Thus, none of the irony of the situation was lost upon Barbara, but when she came to Peter Diller, she made a desperate attempt to be facetious.

"I suppose I can put you down for a dollar as usual?"

"No, ma'am. I've been saving up to get married, and in the interests of my job, so that my wife won't have to support me, you can put three nothings after a five. Shall we make it Christmas Eve? That'll help me remember our anniversary."

"You mean five thousand dollars?" Barbara asked, making no pretense about the extent of her astonishment.

"But only half of it cash. The other half's got to be on time. I can't marry you if I put up more real money than that."

"Don't!"

"Why, what's the matter?"

But Barbara, with an utterly ridiculous suggestion of moisture in her eyes, had passed on.

Perhaps this was why Peter watched her until she entered the auditing department, and afterward. But the chances are, he would have watched her in any case. He had nothing else to do, and the truth of the matter was, he was becoming just a little impatient.

He was beginning to feel that while it might have been perfectly all right for Jacob to wait seven years for his Rachel, his name wasn't Jacob any more than hers was Rachel, and unless something happened pretty soon—

BARBARA entered the brass-railed enclosure that was Raymer's particular domain with a feeling of blackness creeping all about her. It was not the kind of blackness that precedes fainting. She was in no mood to faint, and had no intention of doing anything of the sort.

Raymer at once gave her the impression that he had been waiting for her, and that he thought she might possibly have hurried a little. But when he took the double sheet of foolscap in his hands, he was immediately at his ease again.

She saw him turn it over once or twice, and then saw the rather supercilious, pitying light in his eyes as he looked over the top of it at her.

"Some of these fellows could have done better than this," he confided in a low voice, his position as auditor giving him privileges of inspection and comparison not accorded to every one. "And this is where we show them how"—he glanced at the sheet again—"to do things right. Will you—" He stopped and a sharp look of interrogation, followed by an instant tightening of the mouth, betrayed the fact that he found an entry on the sheet that both surprised and annoyed him. Then slowly his expression altered to a satisfied kind of contempt that made Barbara shrink from him with a queer feeling of shame.

"Diller seems to have done pretty well," he conceded largely, spreading the sheet out flat on the desk. "But, of course, half of it's on the instalment plan, and that kind of thing—" Raymer's smile completed the sentence much more eloquently than words. "Will you write it, or shall I?"

Barbara winced, then laughed, then said jerkily: "You—you do it. It's your money, not mine."

Raymer smiled. Just then, he was willing to be in a good humor and produced his fountain pen with something of a flourish.

"I don't want to do this unless you are with me," he said, and she was tempted to say most emphatically that she was not with him just to see what he would do.

"Oh, what's the use of making believe?"

"Sh! Garret, over there, might hear you."

Barbara turned in Garret's direction, saw that he was giving his attention to his books, then her glance came back to Raymer again and found that he had begun to write.

Her eyes widened and her lower jaw dropped a little and she gripped the edge of the desk and looked again. Raymer straightened up.

"What's wrong? You don't look half as glad as you ought to be."

Barbara choked. She looked at the figures for the third time, then blankly at Raymer, then back to the figures again. No, there was no mistake. Raymer's expression—that of a man who does things as right as they possibly can be done—agreed with the amount he had written in the cash column, opposite his name. And of course none of it was on the instalment plan.

Five thousand dollars in cash! And he had kept her waiting and waiting and waiting, and would still keep her waiting—

"Of course, they may not let me have that much," she heard him say dimly, "but it will show them that my intentions are good."

Then it was that the blackness completely enveloped Barbara. She saw only Raymer's face, and there was no thought of her in it. The only thought was of Raymer, who found it at all times compulsory to do things right—or not at all.

She knew, just as if he had told her, that this money that glared blackly up at her from a dead-white page, was all he had. There was a triumph in his face that betrayed him; the triumph of a little soul who had climbed to an unthought-of height and could hardly refrain from shouting so that his world would know of it.

She glimpsed the mean egotism that was behind it all; the thing that had dallied with seven years of her life, and then, with a grandiloquent flourish, wrote several more years away as if they were of no consequence whatever.

"No! You can't! I won't let you!"

She did not know what she was saying, and cared less. When she snatched the sheet of foolscap from his desk, she did not know just what she was going to do with it, but because it would not crumple very well, the paper being too stiff, she began desperately to tear it before Raymer could move a hand to stop her.

"Barbara! Miss Grant!"

"I don't care! I don't! You're a miserable little rat! Just a miserable little rat! Don't touch me!" She flung the torn bits of paper savagely into his face as she pushed him violently away, then turned and ran.

INSTINCT led her to the cloak room. And nothing in the power of Merril, Gifford & Craik, Incorporated—including Miss Croach who tried it—could have prevented her from reaching the street. She was still running when Peter Diller caught up with her and grabbed her arm, then looked about him, through a light flurry of snow, for a taxi.

"We'll have better luck on Broadway, I guess," he suggested, and proceeded to pilot Barbara in that direction.

She did not know what he was talking about, but she did know that he was Peter, and that he was the only man who could have talked to her at all just then. And presently she was seated beside him in a taxi that was heading up Broadway with, however, no specific destination in view.

"Uptown," was all Peter had said to the driver.

Until they had reached Union Square, neither of them said anything. Then Barbara asked somewhat fearfully, "What did I do?"

"Nothing much. Just flung some bits of paper at Raymer and got out. They won't fire me for marrying you."

Barbara shivered and sat very still until the taxi turned up Fifth Avenue at Twenty-third Street.

"Where are we going?" she asked in a nervous whisper.

"Wherever you say."

"Couldn't we get out and walk?"

"Walk? It's snowing, girl, and you haven't any rubbers."

"Please! I want to walk. I don't like taxis."

So they got out and walked up Fifth Avenue, and by the time they reached Forty-second Street, Barbara's grip on Peter's arm was much surer and tighter.

"Peter!"

This was the first word she had spoken in more than ten blocks.

"Yes?"

"Could we have a cup of coffee somewhere?"

"Sure thing. There's a place right round the corner—"

"Is it cheap?"

Peter tried to get a glimpse of her face.

"What do you mean—cheap?" he asked with perfectly natural resentment.

"I don't want any silver service. Not even a tablecloth. There's a place I know down here—" And she led him east, down Forty-second Street.

A few minutes later as she absently stirred her coffee and trifled with a crumby piece of cake, she said simply, "You've been very kind to me, Peter."

"Sure I have," Peter admitted. "I'm crazy about you."

Barbara laughed, and a passing waitress, with a check-punch dangling at her waist, smiled at the expression on Peter's face. Barbara studied this expression for a little while, then added simply:

"Would it be very terrible if I asked you to marry me?"

"Not so very." Peter said it quietly enough, but he secretly thought that was a hell of a place to put up a proposition like that to him.

"I've been so mean to you," Barbara explained to her coffee-cup. "I feel as if I ought to apologize and—and get down on my knees doing it. So, I'm doing it. Will you marry me, Peter?"

"Now?"

"Now."

Peter nearly knocked over his chair getting to his feet.

"Where's that check? You don't want that coffee. Come on!"

A Novel Complete in This Issue

The Accusing Silence

The Strange Revenge of a Curious, Taciturn, Mysterious Old Woman Who Brought Tragedy to Her Brother's House

By Isabel Ecclestone Mackay

Illustrations by Stockton Mulford

Note: In giving to the public the facts concerning the remarkable case of Miss Anne Crawford, it has been decided to adopt in part the method made familiar by Wilkie Collins in his novel "The Moonstone." Although the work referred to is purely fictional in character, the method used for assembling the supposed facts is excellent and loses nothing of its value when applied to actual happenings. In the present case, it is particularly useful, since Sergeant Detective Wiggan, officer in charge, had, for his own guidance, already obtained written statements from those directly concerned.

The first statement is that of Roberta Marshall, youngest child of Robert Marshall, in whose home Miss Crawford's death took place.

ROBERTA MARSHALL'S STATEMENT

SERGEANT WIGGAN has asked me to make a written statement. That means to write down all I remember of what happened after Aunt Anne came to visit. I know by the way he looked that he doesn't think I can do it properly. So I am going to show him that I jolly well can. He isn't a real sergeant anyway, only a detective one.

We never knew any detectives before. Father is a literary man and he says most detectives are too busy to visit literary people. But when Aunt Anne died so suddenly, and no one knew why, some one had to spare the time to find out. So they sent Detective Wiggan. I could write down what he looks like, but perhaps he'd just as soon I wouldn't.

I should begin, I suppose, by saying that I am Roberta Marshall and I am the youngest in our family. The other one is William and he is a lot older. Not that I am exactly young, either. It won't be any time before I begin to put my hair up. My school-teachers think me very advanced for my age. I could write down several things which would be most interesting but they aren't about Aunt Anne.

The very first thing I remember about Aunt Anne happened at the breakfast table when the letter came. Cousin Fanny, who came to live with us when mother died, always passes father's letters over to him, one by one. Of course, she can't help seeing the envelopes. And she is terribly clever with envelopes. She can guess them nearly all. Usually she says something, just to draw father's attention, such as, "Your insurance again, James," or "A letter from your lawyer, I think." So it is almost as if everybody at the table were getting a letter. William says he wouldn't stand for it. But I think it's nice.

On the morning when *the* letter came there had been several uninteresting ones. One big envelope, which Cousin Fanny thought was from an editor, turned out to be only a subscription due and the blue one, which looked like a letter from our minister, was nothing but pew rent. The third one was just a note from a man who owes father money and would like to pay it but can't. Father put the man's letter in his pocket to read later and looked at Cousin Fanny

Copyright, 1924, by Isabel Ecclestone Mackay.

with his nice blue twinkle. Cousin Fanny was holding the last letter tight and her forehead was all puckered up like it is when she is deciding something.

"Is it a hard one?" asked father. "Better let me look inside."

Cousin Fanny handed the letter over.

"I may be mistaken," she said, "but I think—"

She didn't say what it was she thought. I don't like people to break off like that.

Father opened the letter. It took him a long time to read it, so long that Cousin Fanny couldn't wait.

"*Is* it from Anne?" she said.

"Yes, it is," said father.

There was one of those funny pauses which mean something that you don't understand and then William whistled, and Cousin Fanny said in a very polite voice, "I hope she is well."

"She is not very well," said father, looking at the letter. "Her doctors advise a change of air."

"Oh!" said Cousin Fanny, adding with a kind of gulp, "Here?"

Father nodded. "Read it for yourself." He handed her the letter.

"Couldn't you—" began Cousin Fanny, and, though she didn't ask him what it was he couldn't do, he seemed to know, for he shook his head. "How could I?" he said.

" 'I would if I could, if I couldn't how could I? I couldn't, could you?' " said William and then, as no one paid any attention, he went on. "Is it possible that I notice a certain lack of warmth with reference to a visit from our only rich aunt?"

THAT was the first I knew about Aunt Anne being rich. You see, William remembered her from last time, but I had been only two years old then and couldn't.

"If she wants to come we must make her welcome," said father. "Roberta, if you've finished your breakfast we will excuse you."

So of course I had to be excused. But I did not move very fast and before I had quite left the room I heard William say: "Buck up, dad. I'll take auntie off your hands. I can do with a rich relative very nicely." And father said, "You will oblige me by adopting a different tone, William." Which showed that he was rattled, for father almost never talks like that.

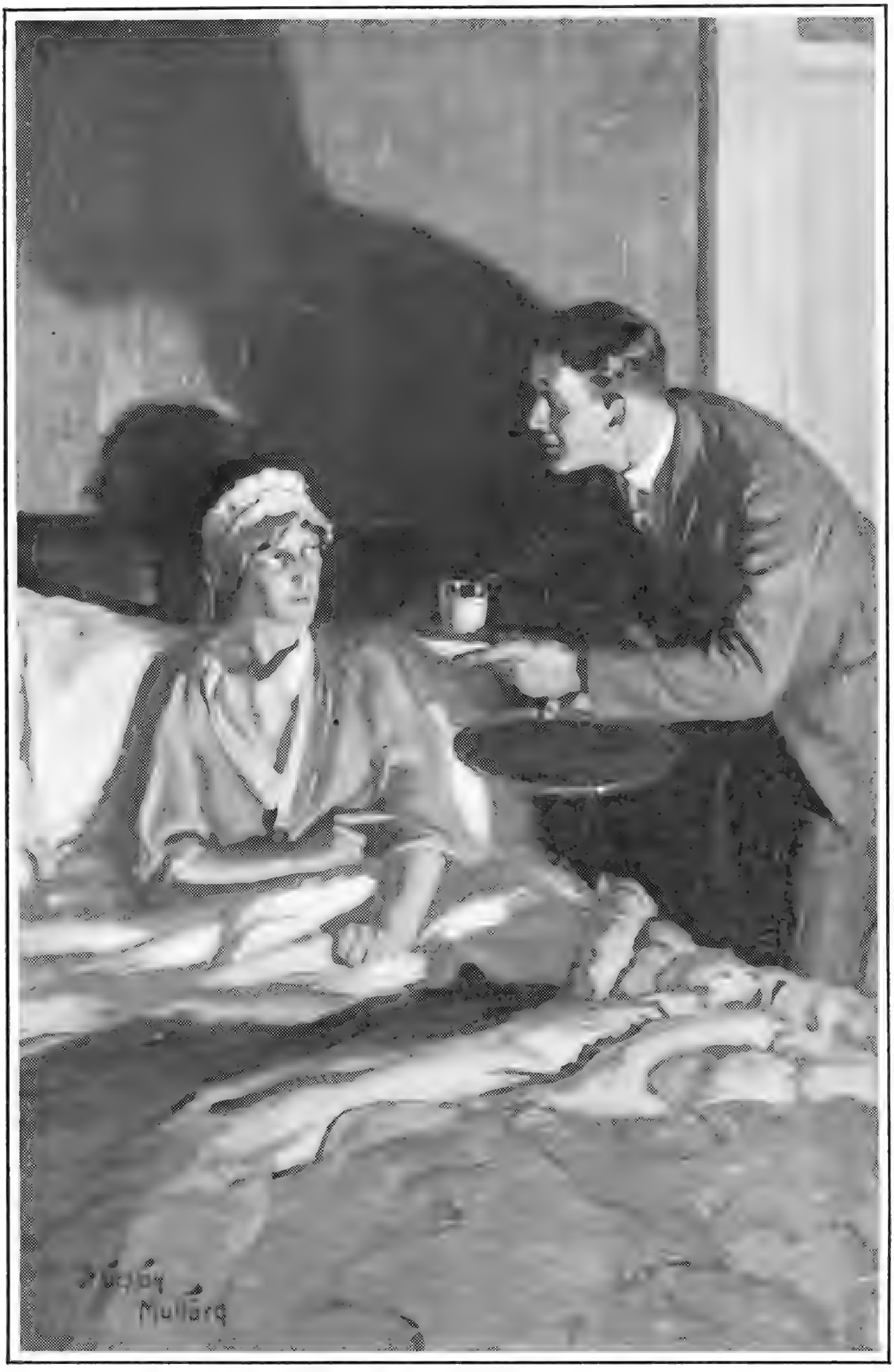
Perhaps I had better tell now who Aunt Anne is—was, I mean. It is easy to get mixed about her because she wasn't father's real sister. She and father did not have the same father and mother until their father and mother got married and then they were only steps. What I mean is that Anne's father was father's stepfather and father's mother was Anne's stepmother; so, in a way, they weren't relatives at all. At least William says they weren't. I hope I make it clear.

All the same, I felt rather pleased that she was coming, for even a kind of step-aunt is a change. I tried hard to remember the last time she visited us but I could only remember what I had been told. And, while I was thinking of that, I suddenly saw why father and Cousin Fanny had acted so strangely. I remembered that Cousin Fanny had said that Aunt Anne was here at the time the ponies ran away with mother. That was ages ago, ten years anyway, and father never speaks about it; but Cousin Fanny told me that if the ponies hadn't got frightened that day I might have had a mother and a baby sister. She said father had "never got over it," and I must never mention it to him because he couldn't bear to be reminded. Perhaps they were afraid that seeing Aunt Anne again would remind him.

I hope I have made that clear?

It was a week after the letter that Aunt Anne came. I offered to drive with father to the station, which was nice of me as I was busy that morning, but father didn't appreciate it and said, "Better not." William offered, too. He said something about it being a "delicate attention" and about "moneyed members of the family," but father didn't laugh as he usually does at William's jokes. Instead, he said quite sharply, "That's enough, William!" and drove away. William looked so surprised that I giggled, but Cousin Fanny said something about him being "singularly lacking in perception." (I remember the words because they are such nice, big ones.) And he looked cross and muttered that it was all "deuced queer." William says "deuced" often but he says it isn't a swear—not after you're twenty-one.

I love meeting people. The first minute of them is always different from any other minute. I was waiting on the steps when the car came back and the first minute of


Dudley Mullard

The expression of her eyes was different. If it didn't sound silly, I would say that she looked triumphant.

Aunt Anne was worth the trouble. She was a real surprise. I don't know what I had expected but I hadn't expected *her*. When she looked at me I felt pins and needles in my hands. Detective Wiggan says "Why?" But I don't know why. For she wasn't at all ugly—at least not at first. Her face was smooth and white like paper and although she must have been frightfully old (even fifty, perhaps) she didn't look as old as Cousin Fanny. She had none of the little wrinkles Cousin Fanny has; her skin was all ironed out. And her eyes were the blackest things I ever saw.

Father introduced us. "This is Roberta," he said.

"HOW do you do, Roberta?" said Aunt Anne. She had the kind of voice that gives you a pain in your teeth. "Delicate, I see," she said, just as if I weren't there. "Two years old, was she not, when the—er—sad event happened? A critical age to be left motherless."

I knew right then that I was going to hate her. For I am *not* delicate, and she reminded father about mother on purpose. I know she did. So if Detective Wiggan wants to accuse me of having put stuff in her milk he is quite welcome to. For I did hate her. I hope I make that clear?

It was because I felt like that that I haven't as much to tell as I might have had. I kept out of her way. I wish now that I had hung around. But, at the time, it seemed hard enough to be polite at meals. Especially as what we had to eat never suited her. She had the indigestion. Luckily she couldn't stick me, either, although she called me "Dear child" all the time. Besides, whenever I was anywhere near, she used me to *remind* father. She would say: "You are too much with older people, dear child. Ah, if your baby sister had lived!" or "Why so abrupt in manner, my dear? If your dear mother had been spared—" and things like that. Every time she did it father's face would get white. No wonder I kept away!

I think it was to liven things up that Cousin Fanny invited Gwen. Gwen is going to marry William some day when he can support her. She is a nice person to invite because she doesn't fuss. William is going to get a really good job next month. He is going to be a subeditor to father's friend, Mr. Banks. They may get married then. Father says it's a wonderful chance for William's age, but father thinks William wonderful anyway. So do Cousin Fanny and Gwen—only Gwen thinks he needs some one to steady him. I'm not supposed to know, but I think he was rather unsteady for a while—nothing much.

I like Gwen. She's not too dreadfully pretty and she has a nice laugh. When she's in the house everything is jolly. I think that's why Cousin Fanny invited her, although the reason given was "to introduce William's fiancée to Aunt Anne."

All I have to say about the introduction is that Gwen did not disappoint me. She had absolutely no use for Aunt Anne from the first. William tried to jolly her out of it but she kept on being just fearfully polite and nothing more.

For the funny thing about it was that William and Aunt Anne got on splendidly. She was different to him. And he couldn't see what it was we didn't like. I am perfectly sure she tried to make him like her and, if Detective Wiggan wants to detect anything, he ought to detect why. It wasn't because she liked *him!* More than once, when he wasn't looking, I have seen her look at him just like she looked at me—and I could feel the prickles in my hands.

Luckily, it was fine weather and I could stay outdoors. Even with Gwen there, it wasn't pleasant. Aunt Fanny was flustered and father was grave and Mary and Nora (our "help") were cross because of extra work and because they didn't take to Aunt Anne.

"As tiresome a missus as I ever did for," said Mary. "And with an eye like a gimlet, boring holes!" Nora said. "'Tis an evil eye, for sure." She wouldn't tell me what an "evil eye" was, but I looked it up in the encyclopedia. And I quite agree with Nora.

SERGEANT WIGGAN says I'm to write down all I remember about a conversation I heard between William and Gwen on the terrace. I don't think it's any of his business. It was a private conversation and the reason I heard it was not because I was listening but because I happened to be there. They didn't see me, but that wasn't my fault. Besides, I never would have said a word about it only that Detective Wiggan asked me if I knew why William had quarreled with Aunt Anne and I said

I could give a good guess. And then father said I must tell. The truth, he said, never hurt any innocent person, but to try to hide anything would look as if we thought William wasn't innocent, which was being as silly as Sergeant Wiggan. I hope I make that clear?

It wasn't much, anyway. William and Gwen came out of the French window and sat down on the terrace seat. I was behind the oleander. I did say "Ahem!" but they didn't pay any attention. Besides, they looked so cross I thought they might be going to break their engagement, and I wanted to see how it was done. William was asking Gwen to "For heaven's sake be reasonable!" and Gwen said she'd rather be right than reasonable any day and she knew she was right. William kind of groaned and wanted to know if she didn't think he had any common sense, and Gwen said he might have common sense but he hadn't any instinct and that she had an instinct and that she didn't like Aunt Anne's eyes. William laughed. I didn't blame Gwen for being mad at the way he laughed.

"Very well," she said, very stiff. "We'll leave it at that."

"But, darling!" said William. "Fancy talking about eyes! And even if there were more than eyes, don't you think I am able to look after myself?"

"No, I don't," said Gwen. "That's why I'm taking on the job."

They made it up then. I know they did because—well, I know they did, anyway. And when they were quite comfortable William began all over again. (Men do that.) He said he knew that women have prejudices.

"Instincts," said Gwen.

"Prejudices," said William.

"When Aunt Anne lends me the money I need, you'll admit that I am right," said William.

"If she does, I may; but she never will," said Gwen.

I can't remember all that William said, but it was something about that if he couldn't get the money he hoped for from aunt, he would lose the chance of being subeditor to Mr. Banks. There had been money in the bank which he had been going to put into the business, but he had used it all. He hadn't told father because he knew father couldn't help and it would only worry him. William said: "I know I've played the fool in the past, but it's hard lines if our future has to pay for it."

Gwen said, "We'll get through somehow." And William brightened up again. He said he knew Aunt Anne would help. He had told her he was in a hole and she hadn't been surprised. She had promised to see what she could do and she was to let him know about it tomorrow night. "It's my last chance," he said; "and it's simply got to happen."

"Poor old Billy!" said Gwen and then she hooked her arm in his and they moved away. I was terribly interested but of course I did not follow. That would have been playing Miss Pry.

All the same, I was naturally curious to know what Aunt Anne would do for William and next night, after he'd gone into her room with her milk, I waited around for him to come out. I intended to ask him right out if she had done the decent thing. But when I saw how frightfully upset he was I didn't ask him anything. Besides, Cousin Fanny was in the hallway and I couldn't. Detective Wiggan wants to know what I mean by "upset," but if he doesn't know what "upset" means I can't tell him. He wants to know if I heard any loud voices while William was in aunt's room and I had to admit that I am not deaf.

It was the next night that Aunt Anne, who, as I said before, had had an indigestion ever since she came, was taken with a very bad spell and died in the night. She must have eaten something which disagreed with her. But the doctor says it was poison and we have been having dreadful trouble ever since—but Detective Wiggan says some one else will tell about that.

(*Signed*) ROBERTA MARSHALL.

COUSIN FANNY'S STATEMENT

I AM afraid I cannot see just how a statement from me can help to explain the strange and terrible thing which has come so suddenly upon us. But Sergeant Wiggan, a most polite man though greatly mistaken in his opinions, considers that a sensitive disposition such as mine may find a written statement less confusing than questioning. And I confess that questions, especially if uttered in too brisk a manner, tend to have an agitating effect.

The sergeant also says that feelings are not evidence. But in this I do not agree with him. Feelings, when properly understood, are the very best of evidence. Did I not feel very strongly that Anne should never have paid us this visit? And have not events abundantly justified me?

I do not blame Robert for inviting her, of course. It was enough that he felt it an obligation. Family ties carry certain duties and as Anne and Robert, though no blood relation, were brought up as brother and sister, Robert naturally felt her claim upon him. He felt this all the more strongly, possibly, since, for so long a period, she had made no claim whatever. Her only other visit had taken place some ten years previously.

Detective Wiggan wishes me to make a few notes regarding this first visit, seeing that, as a guest in the house at the time, I am able to speak of it at first hand. It was a tragic visit and as such is engraven on my memory, for before it ended the fatality had happened which left my cousin a widower and his children motherless. At that time Robert had been married to our dear Claire for thirteen happy years. William was twelve, Roberta barely two and a new addition to the family was shortly expected. I may note that I am not superstitious, yet I felt it unfortunate that the year should have been the thirteenth of their union and I remember feeling relieved when Robert informed me that Miss Anne Crawford, his stepsister whom I had never met, proposed to be with us for a short visit.

Robert himself, I remember, seemed more surprised than pleased. I gathered that, when they were both much younger, there had been a certain unpleasantness between his stepsister and himself. In fulfilling a duty which he believed to devolve upon him, Robert had laid himself open to her violent resentment and for years there had been no intercourse between them. However, since the initiative came from her, he and Claire were too happy to harbor ill feeling. They determined to make her visit a pleasant one.

Why it was, from the first, so much the reverse of what they hoped, I do not know. Was it the shadow of the coming calamity? Perhaps. I am not superstitious but there are such things as presentiments, I believe. At any rate, it is true that, with the coming of the expected visitor, the atmosphere of that happy and contented home changed to one of discomfort and unrest. I am sensitive to impressions and felt the change at once without being at all able to account for it. It was something which tainted the air like an evil fog or mist. Our dear Claire felt it even more strongly than I and became nervous and apprehensive. It was plain to see that she shrank from her husband's sister, and this in spite of the fact that Anne seemed to take a great fancy to her and made her more than one generous gift. This state of things reacted on Robert, who became more anxious than the occasion seemed to warrant. We were all most uncomfortable.

Among the presents which Anne (who was a rich woman in her own right) had given my cousin Claire was one in which she took much pleasure—a pair of well broken driving ponies for her own use. Since she had given up riding, Claire found her greatest recreation in driving and, as the ponies seemed quiet and well trained, there seemed no reason why she should not indulge this desire to her heart's content. Also, although she preferred walking herself, the one pleasant and human thing about Anne was the interest she took in these health-giving drives. If the day proved too bad for Claire to venture out, Anne seemed almost as disappointed as Claire herself.

All the same, none of us felt sorry when, after a ten-day stay, our visitor announced her intention of leaving us next day. I think we all felt rather ashamed of the lightening of our spirits. Robert was quite his old self at luncheon and Claire had lost her worried look. It was a beautiful day. I shall never forget it, for its beauty had become dreadful to us before it ended.

CLAIRE set out for her drive earlier than usual. And an hour later she was brought home unconscious. She and her new-born baby died that night. The ponies had suddenly taken fright—I do not need to go into details; indeed, I am confused about them. I was alone in the house when they brought her back—Robert was in town and Anne had gone out for a farewell walk—I have always been uncertain as to how I got through that dreadful time. Looking back, it seems like an impossible nightmare. Robert was beside himself, making the wildest accusations, and William was, of course, too young to be of much assistance.

Under the circumstances, Anne offered to prolong her stay, but Robert—well, Robert was hardly responsible for what he did or said. I suppose it was only natural that he should remember that if Anne had not given Claire the ponies, the accident would not have happened. Nor was I myself quite free from a sort of bitterness against her for the same reason. It was an immense relief to us all when she left.

I have given this short account of that first visit because it explains, quite satisfactorily, I think, why dear Robert did not welcome the idea of Anne coming again. It speaks well for his fairness of mind that he did not allow this disinclination to affect his action. For myself—I might have acted differently had the decision lain with me. For, while disliking anything which savors of superstition, I have always held that there is something fatal about certain people. Their presence seems to bring misfortune.

Following Robert's admirable example, I endeavored to reason myself out of this feeling. It seemed absurd to suppose that anything bad could come of a casual visit from a relative and I determined to be cheerful and sensible. But no sooner had Anne arrived than I became aware of the same undefined dread which had disturbed me before. Even the fact that her appearance had not changed frightened me—the same colorless, smooth face, as if life could leave no mark upon it, the same veiled eyes, black and cold like water in a stagnant well, and the same nerve-rasping voice.

It was easy to see that Robert felt as I did, for although I knew that he had lately met with disappointment in his investments, it took more than money troubles to bring that look of anxiety into his eyes. Anne knew it was there and I believe she knew why. I have seen her looking at him with a little, secret smile—a really horrible smile as if she would have liked to lick her lips with the enjoyment of something. And all the while there was absolutely nothing which one could put into words.

It is hardly necessary to say that nothing had ever been done to prejudice William and Roberta against their aunt; they were quite free to form their own opinions. Roberta at once took a violent dislike to her, a dislike which she allowed to be all too apparent. I have never believed in attaching too much importance to the likings of children, but I am now inclined to think that there may be something instructive in the apparently causeless aversions of the young. At any rate, I was not surprised at Roberta's feeling.

WHAT did surprise me was the attitude of William. Sergeant Wiggan has asked me in what way the general family discomfort was reflected by my nephew. I say, in no way at all. Oddly enough, from the very first, Anne was nice with William. If she had ever shown signs of liking anybody I should say that she liked him. Roberta insists that she did not. But Roberta is, of course, a child. At any rate, she was consistently pleasant to him—listening to him in that impressed manner that young men find flattering, and carrying on discussions with him with an animation entirely absent from her general conversation.

Naturally the boy (for he is scarcely more) was attracted and very willingly placed himself at her disposal for the performance of the many small services which she constantly required of him. Anne was as fond of walking as ever. It helped her indigestion, she said, and William was always her chosen companion. She appeared to take great interest in his fad for photographing birds and insisted upon his teaching her how to develop and print the negatives. This made things easier for us all.

Sergeant Wiggan wishes to know whether William, at this time, was aware of his aunt's being a rich woman in her own right. I consider the question a reflection on William's motives, which is entirely unwarranted. But I will answer it frankly. Of course he knew it. He joked about it and about his own intention of "flim-flamming" his "only rich relative." I state this without reserve, for no one who knows William would ever confuse such jesting with the boy's real feeling for his aunt. He liked her because she made herself likable to him. Any thought of her money would be quite apart from that.

At the same time I think it only natural that he may have hoped that her liking for him would find expression in pleasantly substantial ways. It is a feeling natural within family bonds and perfectly justified. I am only a cousin myself but if I had money I should feel slighted and hurt if William and Roberta should not look upon me as a possible means of auxiliary revenue. This giving and taking is natural and proper between relatives.

But, to return: Anne had been with us only two or three days when she began to be fussy about the food. She had stomach trouble, she said, and had to be very careful. She was continually sending messages to cook, although I am sure that everything was very nice indeed. Finally, she took nothing at dinner except the soup. She had, she said, some digestive biscuits with her and, if William would be so kind as to fetch her a glass of hot milk each night at about ten, she would manage very well. I suggested that Nora, the maid, could easily fetch the milk. But Nora, I am sorry to say, was sulky about it and Anne declared that the milk she brought was never hot; so William added this to his list of little services and, though I should have thought that anything taken at night would have been the very worst thing for stomach trouble, the arrangement did seem to make Anne more amiable.

THE indigestion, however, got worse. Robert was worried and anxious to call in a doctor but Anne absolutely refused to consider it. All that she needed, she said, was rest, and she took to staying in her room most of the day.

Sergeant Wiggan has asked me if William seemed at all upset by his aunt's indisposition. I cannot say that he did. He was attentive to her but his general spirits seemed unaffected. I remember, though, that Robert asked him to try to induce his aunt to see a doctor and William promised that he would. One thing I must insist upon, and that is that, until the very last, there was nothing in Anne's condition to alarm anybody. If there had been, if she had appeared to be really ill at all, I am sure that William would never have allowed himself to lose his temper with her as he did upon the night before she died.

Detective Wiggan says I must be very careful to tell exactly all I know about that night. And that is easy, for I know very little. We had had a peaceful evening, for Anne had desired to be left alone after dinner, and at ten, as usual, William prepared and carried up her milk. It was his habit to stay awhile and chat with her while she drank it, so he was still in her room when I went upstairs, about fifteen minutes later. I will admit that I was amazed to hear loud voices as I passed along the corridor. I may say that a raised voice is seldom heard in this house. I was both shocked and startled. It seemed incredible that William should so far forget himself as to argue heatedly with a guest; yet when I remembered who the guest was, I cannot say that surprise was my strongest emotion. Perhaps what I chiefly felt during those moments was a thrill of satisfaction that the friendship between those two had come to a natural end. I had never felt easy about it and that's the truth. *I did not* hear anything that was said.

While I hesitated in the corridor, Anne's door flung open and William came out. He did not seem to see me and brushed past without a word. The dear boy was certainly not like himself—he was visibly disturbed.

"What is it, William?" I said. "Have you been trying to persuade Anne to see a doctor?" It may sound foolish but the doctor was the only thing I could think of at the moment over which they might have quarreled.

"A doctor?" he said as if he did not know what I meant, and then, in a more natural voice: "It's not a doctor she needs. Oh, I say, what a fool I've been!" Then he went into his room and banged the door.

Detective Wiggan seems to think that I should have questioned William further but I knew that if there was anything he wished me to know he would tell me in his own time. The episode, though unusual, might have been quite unimportant, and was, in any case, his private affair. The same reflection kept me from demanding an explanation from Anne.

The next morning Anne sent word that she had suffered from distress in the night and would remain in bed. Gwen and I both hurried up to see her, but, beyond the fact that she had not felt like rising, neither of us could see that she looked any worse than the day before. Robert, however, was troubled and declared definitely his intention of calling in a doctor whether she wished it or not. She, on her part, declared that she would refuse to see him, but, finding Robert still determined, she gave in and agreed to a compromise—if she were not considerably better by the next morning she would then admit the need of a physician and see one at once. This sounded reasonable, for no one considered her condition serious, much less dangerous. Naturally, Robert blames himself greatly for not having persisted, but, in face of her opposition, there seemed nothing else to do.

WE SPENT a quiet day. Gwen was returning home and William accompanied her. They both seemed somewhat depressed in spirits and I thought that William was probably blaming himself for losing his temper the night before. I know that he called in to see his aunt before leaving, asking if there were anything he could do for her in the village. She told him that there was nothing. But, no sooner had he and Gwen driven off, than she called in Jimmy Stubbs, the chore boy, and gave him a letter and a parcel to post with instructions to lose no time in doing so. Now, as William drove directly past the post-office, this seemed odd. To me it showed plainly that she still harbored resentment from the night before.

In the afternoon Anne seemed better and sat up for a while at the window. I felt it my duty to keep her company and did so, Nora brought us tea at half-past four and Anne ate some thin toast without butter. I asked her if there were not something special which we might provide for her dinner—a little sago pudding for instance. But she was quite brusque about that, declaring that she would be better with no dinner at all but that she would take her hot milk and digestive biscuits as usual later on. I am glad now that I told her then what had been on my conscience for some days; namely, that I considered hot milk at night very indigestible. But she did not thank me. She merely said, with a disagreeable smile, "It will take more than hot milk to kill *me*."

William was walking on the terrace when I went down. He still seemed moody but asked at once how his aunt seemed. I said she seemed somewhat better and, later, I proposed that, if he wished, I would take her milk up to her that night. I thought that, if there were strained relations between them, he might welcome the offer. But he didn't. He thanked me and said no, everything had better be as usual. In order that he might know what to expect, however, I told him about the parcel and letter which Anne had not given him to post; and he was so interested that he let his cigarette burn his finger and was compelled to say a word which I would rather not write, although he apologized immediately and I really think he may be excused, considering how painful a burn can be. Then he laughed oddly and said, "I think I can guess what was in that letter all right." Naturally I asked, "What?" But he did not seem to hear me.

In answer to Detective Wiggan's questions I may say that sometimes Nora heated the milk, though William always took it up. But this was Nora's day out. William heated the milk himself and was, I am sure, most careful. How there could possibly have been anything wrong with it I do not see. Certainly, Anne made no complaint when I called in to say good night—stay, though, I remember now that she had not yet taken the milk. It was standing on the little table by her bed and I remember thinking that if she left it much longer it would be quite cold.

So far as I know, I was the last person to see Anne alive. During the night she must have been taken suddenly and fatally ill, for when Nora took up her tea in the morning she found her dead.

It was a very great shock.

It seemed, in fact, unbelievable until I remembered certain other cases where acute indigestion had been followed by heart failure. I suggested heart failure to the doctor and he was almost rude. He was not, I may say, our family physician, Dr. McKinnon, but a young man who is his "locum-tenens." It would have been different, I am sure, had Dr. McKinnon been at home. Not that I have any criticism to make of the young man's abilities, only of his manners. If he says that Anne died of an overdose of arsenic, I am not able to contradict him. It may seem absurd to me, but I realize that I am not a medical man. All that I would like to ask the young man is: how can you possibly die of arsenic poisoning when all you have taken is hot milk and digestive biscuits? I don't suppose they put arsenic in biscuits, especially digestive ones? I pointed out this simple fact to Sergeant Wiggan and he agreed with me. "As a matter of fact, ma'am," he said, "they don't."

(*Signed*) FANNY M. HORTON.

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1924

P.S. I reopen this to say that I blame this young doctor entirely for the fact that an inquest was thought necessary. The unpleasant publicity has been most trying. And of course they couldn't tell us anything we didn't know before. "Person or persons unknown" is merely confusing, I think.

STATEMENT OF MISS GWENDOLINE HERNEY

WHAT I have to say will necessarily be very brief and is of interest only because I was a guest at Vinecroft for the week preceding the death of Miss Anne Crawford. The reason for my visit at that time was the desire of the family that I should meet William's aunt.

Unfortunately, it was not a very successful visit. Miss Crawford and I were not attracted to each other. It is unpleasant to write seemingly ungracious things of the dead, but, if my impressions are to be of any value at all, the necessity for strict truth must be also its defense.

Upon my arrival at Vinecroft I found there an atmosphere which was very foreign to its usual delightful ease. There was strain and discomfort in the very air. To say that Miss Fanny was nervous, Mr. Marshall gloomy and unsmiling, Roberta either impish or silent and the servants sulky is to give any one who knew the place some idea of the change. The cause of the unrest was obvious in the personality of the visitor. She must have been one of those people who bring a disturbing force with them. It was almost funny to feel the air change when she entered a room. I was both repelled and interested and tried to find out what it was which accounted for such a peculiar effect. But there seemed to be nothing tangible.

In appearance Miss Crawford was a fine-looking woman—at least one received that impression at first sight. But, later, her very good looks became repelling. For myself I came to quite dislike the white smoothness of her face. It came to seem like a mask, something that didn't belong—something abnormal. She had strange eyes, too, eyes which she kept half closed but which, when open, revealed a shallow glitter. Her voice was harsh, a croaking voice. Her manner, while punctilious, was cold and forbidding.

I have read this description over and fear that it fails to convey any real idea of Miss Crawford's personality. So, as I can think of nothing to add, it may be that natures such as hers do not yield themselves to description. The antagonism, even repulsion, which I and others undoubtedly felt was probably caused by something too impalpable to capture in words. But it wasn't imagination, for the whole household, with one exception, was affected by it.

The exception was William and this surprised me, for usually he and I like and dislike the same people. However, the reason, when I found it, seemed simple enough—Miss Crawford was different with William. She could, and did, make herself very pleasant to him, and it is only human for any one to take a person as they show themselves and not as they may appear to other people. Perhaps there is even a subtle flattery in being the object of the agreeableness of a disagreeable person.

WILLIAM was naturally anxious that his aunt and I should like each other, but even he could see that her attitude was not hopeful. She was polite but her politeness was the courtesy of complete indifference. Perhaps I did not do all that I might have done, either. I wish now that I had tried to know her better. I can't help feeling that somehow *in her* lay the explanation of this horrible mystery. If some one had only been clever enough to understand!

But there is no use in regretting now. At the time, I saw no reason for making any effort toward understanding any one so unattractive. Instead, I devoted myself to making things as pleasant as possible for my fellow sufferers. Of my own feeling I said little or nothing until I began to fear that William was laying himself open to a very heavy disappointment. I found that he had been placing extravagant hopes upon a kindness which he thought his Aunt Anne would do for him. This alarmed me out of my silence and I told him, as plainly as I could, how certain I was that she was not a philanthropist. Manlike, he demanded facts, and I had no facts—only instinct. We almost quarreled on the issue. But I had not long to wait for justification. The very next night, William put the matter to her squarely and received a final and definite refusal. This was the substance of the famous "quarrel" which Detective Wiggan makes so much of.

It is true that William was first incredulous and then angry. Any one would have been. Why had she allowed and even encouraged him to hope if there had been no foundation for hoping? Surely it was maddening to have her coldly say that if he had misunderstood her kindness it was entirely his own affair—and that she, on her part, was disappointed to find his attachment to her based upon so mercenary a motive! This humiliating charge was so unexpected and so unfair that William could hardly find words to answer it. If she could really *think* such things, what was the use of protesting? And yet, when he saw how neatly she had played him for a fool, he—well, he did speak in a way for which he was afterward sorry.

Sergeant Wiggan wishes to know whether William was aware of his aunt having made a will in his favor. Yes, he was. She had herself told him of it and he had told me. He told it merely to prove to me that what he called my "prejudice" against his aunt was unfair. However, he was thoroughly disillusioned. He had honestly believed in her affection for him but the belief did not survive their talk that night. After that, there would have been no thought of inheritance from her, even if she had not told him plainly that she intended to change her will.

In answer to Sergeant Wiggan's questions: I do not know the exact sum of money which William wished his aunt to lend him. Surely the obvious thing to do is to ask William himself. All I know is that it was to replace a sum which William was supposed to have but which he, unfortunately, had used in other ways.

I think there is nothing else that I can say. I have tried to keep all feeling out of this statement. Sergeant Wiggan's badly repressed suspicion that William may in some way be responsible for his aunt's sudden death is too absurd to admit of indignation. How she died I do not pretend to know, but, if there is a mystery about it, it is a scandal that the time which should be used in solving it should be wasted on such obvious foolishness.

(*Signed*) GWENDOLINE HERNEY.

Letter and enclosure from McGregor & Stokes, Barristers and Solicitors, to Robert Marshall, Esq.:

September 18, 1922.

Robert Marshall, Esq.,
"Vinecroft,"
Chesterton.

DEAR MR. MARSHALL:

We are greatly shocked to hear of the sudden death of our client Miss Anne Crawford at your home on the 17th instant. Under the circumstances we conceive it our duty to enclose you a copy of a communication from her, which reached our office on the morning of same date, and to inform you that we have placed the original of said communication in the hands of the proper authorities for investigation. The Will referred to is in our keeping. Feeling that you would have wished us to proceed in the manner indicated, we are,

Very sincerely yours,
JOHN MCGREGOR.
(For McGregor & Stokes)

Copy of enclosed communication, being a letter from Miss Anne Crawford to John McGregor, written and mailed on September 16:

DEAR MR. MCGREGOR:

You will think this letter strange—but I can't help that. The fact is that I shall feel more at ease if some one besides myself knows of a fear which is hourly growing upon me—a fear for my personal safety.

You will bear me out that I am not a woman inclined to idle fancies and you may safely conclude that I would not write to you in this manner without due cause. What the cause is, I will tell you at length when we meet. At present it is enough to say that I have passed through a very unpleasant experience owing to my having been compelled to refuse to advance a considerable sum of money to my nephew, William. The young man was dangerously disappointed and the fact that he is aware of his present position as my sole heir increases my nervousness. I shall rectify the matter of the Will immediately and for that purpose will ask you to visit me here upon the 18th, when I hope to be feeling somewhat recovered. Following that, it is my intention to leave my brother's house the moment my strength allows me.

My present apprehensions may be quite unnecessary but if, in the meantime, news of any alarming kind should reach you, I beg that you will act at once on my behalf, using this letter as authority.

Sincerely yours,
ANNE CRAWFORD.

ROBERT MARSHALL'S STATEMENT

I AM glad that Sergeant Wiggan has asked for a written statement of conditions and events leading up to our present serious situation. (For that it is serious, I can no longer fail to see.) Perhaps the careful putting down of definite facts may help to subdue the confusion present in my own mind.

Anne is dead. She died while a guest in

my house. The doctors say she died from poisoning—not accidental poisoning, but poisoning deliberate and premeditated—the poison having been administered, according to the coroner's jury, by "a person or persons unknown." The house is under surveillance. There is a police detective in charge.

These statements, as I write them down, seem fantastic to a degree. Let any one who reads this—any ordinary, normal man of middle age—imagine writing such absurdities with relation to himself, his household, his normal, sane everyday world. Murder or suicide in one's own family? Absurd! I have said "absurd" a thousand times, yet the facts remain. . . .

Where shall I begin? In this case I suppose the beginning dates back to my first knowledge of my stepsister, Anne. My life, before that, can have little interest, so I will compress it into a few sentences. I was an only child. My father died when I was still in babyhood, leaving my mother an attractive young widow. For ten years she devoted herself to my upbringing and then, not unnaturally, married again. Her second husband was a widower with one daughter, two years older than myself. He was a wealthy man, by name Adam Crawford, and his daughter was his only tie. It seemed an ideal match and was, I think, a fairly happy one. My memory is of a good-natured stepfather, and of a mother cheerful and content. Her one disappointment was her stepdaughter, Anne. My mother had, I know, looked forward to Anne. She had always wanted a daughter—a girl who could be her companion in the home, whom she could dress daintily and over whom she could "fuss" without restraint. Before the marriage she was never tired of talking to me of the little sister I was to have and to whom she hoped I would devote myself in a properly chivalrous manner.

It was rather a shock to both of us when the "little sister" coldly rejected devotion of any kind. There was no childish rebellion or display of temper from which a happier understanding might have resulted, rather a hard, unsmiling acceptance which resisted all my mother's warm advances. As for me, after the first hurt to my vanity was healed, Anne's attitude was a relief. She was, at that age, a sullen, rather homely schoolgirl, all legs and arms, thin face and muddy complexion. Her one beauty was her hair, which she wore in long pigtails—a never failing temptation to the mischievous hands of an eleven-year-old boy.

When I was twelve and Anne fourteen both of us were sent away to school. We saw little of each other even in the holidays and I hardly realized how her appearance had changed until I saw her on her graduation day—a strikingly handsome young woman. The muddy complexion was no more, the arms and legs had become perfect proportions of an admirable whole—even the sullen expression was replaced by one of vivacity and eager interest. She was considered immensely clever, had graduated with highest honors and allowed it to be understood that she intended to devote herself to some serious work.

I congratulated her with a warmth which I had hardly expected to feel, but was brought up sharply by a look which reminded me all too vividly of the old Anne. Her eyes, I saw, had not changed, but were still of that dark, shining coldness which forbade advance. I hastily introduced my friend, Mark Summers, and left them together.

PERHAPS the real story begins here, for if Anne had not met Summers on that graduation day everything might have been different. It was a case on her part of the much derided love at first sight. Anne became infatuated with Summers. I am no psychologist and shall not attempt to explain why the whole of this girl's strange, cold nature should have melted and warmed into passionate devotion for this charming but ordinary young man. Mark Summers had delightful manners, a splendid physique and a cheerful disposition. He never pretended to any depth of character and was at first more dismayed than flattered by my handsome sister's preference for himself. He accepted, however, my mother's invitation to visit us and youth and propinquity did the rest. As the visit drew to a close, Mark confessed himself very much in love. Mother was delighted and Anne was so changed by happiness that we hardly knew her.

Then the unexpected happened. Mr. Crawford quietly but definitely refused to sanction the engagement. He forbade the young people to see any more of each other and to all Mark's bewildered protests and questions returned only one answer, "Anne knows why." He intimated that it would please him if Mark were to terminate his visit at once, which, of course, he did. But not before he had sought my help, begging me to talk my unaccountable stepfather into something like reason.

This I felt fairly certain of doing. My stepfather and myself had always been on the best of terms and I had never found him lacking in either fairness or common sense. His attitude now I could only explain by some hitherto unexpected jealousy of Anne. So I began by saying that all parents must expect to lose their daughters some day. Rather to my annoyance he laughed indulgently.

"Barking up the wrong tree this time, son," he said.

So I refrained from more wisdom and asked him flatly why he was being absurd about Anne. "She's had dozens of admirers before," I said, "and you never said anything against her marrying them."

"Because I knew she hadn't the faintest intention of doing it," he said. "I hadn't realized that the Summers affair was serious or I would have spoken sooner."

"You mean you do not wish Anne to marry?" I asked in amazement.

He nodded.

"Not ever?"

"Never."

I asked him as politely as I could if he were crazy.

"No," he said very quietly, "but Anne's mother was."

When he had given me a moment or two to get over the shock of it, he explained.

"Anne knows all about it," he said. "And I hoped that a situation like this would never arise. But she seems to have lost her wits as well as her heart over this young Summers. She will listen to nothing—although I have seen to it that she is not ignorant of what marriage might mean. So there is nothing left but that I should do my duty. Of one thing I am thoroughly determined. No man shall ever be allowed to marry my daughter as I was allowed to marry her unfortunate mother without a knowledge of the nature and menace of this hereditary horror."

His cheerful, good-natured face had gone quite white as he said this, but there was implacable resolve in his voice. Besides, with right so plainly on his side, what could one say? I managed to falter out something to the effect that I didn't know what Anne would do.

He was silent for so long that I began to feel uncomfortable, and then: "Neither do I," he said. "But what you and I must do is clear. If anything should happen to me, you must act for me. You are not a boy any longer. Tonight I shall give you a sealed envelope which, if I am not here to do it myself, you will hand to Mark Summers if ever the question of his marriage to Anne should be seriously entertained."

It was a command rather than a request and I accepted it as such. Besides, it seemed a useless precaution as he was then in better health than I. I took the envelope and promptly forgot about it until, only six months later, the improbable became the actual, and my stepfather lost his life in a drowning accident. He had gone down to Rainbow Lake to spend the week-end with my mother and Anne, who were holidaying there. A canoe in which he and Anne were crossing the lake was upset in a sudden squall. Anne was saved. She was an excellent swimmer and very cool in an emergency. Her father, heavy and out of training, sank before help arrived.

MY MOTHER was heartbroken. And Anne, too, was greatly affected. Always strange in her ways, it did not surprise us when she declared that she must "be alone for a while." She was rich now by her father's will and could choose practically what life she wished, so that, occupied as I was with my mother's affairs, it was natural that I should give little thought to those of Anne. It was the merest chance that I heard through a casual acquaintance of Mark Summers's intended marriage. I remember that my tongue seemed to move slowly as I asked for the name of the bride. Mark was making rather a silly secret of that, my informant said, but every one guessed that the bride was a Miss Anne Crawford—"a regular stunner and rich at that."

My personal reaction to this unwelcome news is not of particular interest. But what I did is important. I took the sealed envelope and went direct to Summers.

His reception of me was markedly sheepish, because, as he explained, it seemed "so dashed silly" that I had not been properly informed of the prospective wedding. It was only "one of Anne's queer ideas," but she had made "rather a point" of my not knowing. It was borne in upon me from the tone of these remarks that Mark's devotion to Anne had waned, though I doubt if he were yet conscious of its waning. In any case, his feelings had nothing to do with my duty toward Anne's dead father. I gave him the sealed letter.

Mark read the letter in silence. It seemed to take him a long time. I had been looking out of the window but, at last, slightly impatient and more anxious than I cared to show, I turned to him. He was not reading the letter at all. It had fallen on the floor and Mark was staring in front of him with such a face of shock and horror as I hope never to see again.

I do not know what the letter told him, but whatever it was, it was more than enough. Mark was not the man for desperate adventures.

I was leaving the room without a word when Summers's voice stopped me at the door.

"Do—do you suppose she *knew?*"

It was a most unpleasant situation.

"She may have known without understanding," I said at last. It was the best that I could do.

Three days later, Anne appeared suddenly at my mother's house and came directly to the room where I was reading. She seemed quite composed.

"Mark has had a letter," she said at once, "a letter telling him some incidents of family history. He refuses to say where it came from. Do you know?"

I hesitated and then: "It came from your father," I said.

I thought her eyes shifted for an instant but they steadied again.

"My father is dead," she replied impassively. "I gather, then, that it was you who gave the letter to Mark?"

There was something in her quietness which affected me as no ranting would have done. I felt most desperately sorry for her. And I also felt afraid.

"I had promised him," I said, "as your brother—"

I did not finish. Her eyes, which she had a trick of holding half shut, had suddenly opened, and the glare in them struck the words from my lips.

"I think you will be sorry—brother!" she said.

Her voice had not risen by a tone. She left the house as quietly as she had entered it. I heard my mother call her, but she did not turn nor answer.

WHEN next we had word of her it was to learn, through a friend, that she was in a private nursing home recovering, it was understood, from a nervous breakdown. She was unable, the doctors said, to see anybody. Even my mother was refused admission. She remained there for almost two years, her nervous condition being probably aggravated by news of the death of Mark Summers. This took place a year after the breaking of their engagement and sounds like an affecting end to a tragic love affair, but, as a matter of proven fact, poor old Mark died of pneumonia, caused by a characteristic neglect of ordinary precautions after a hotly contested Rugby match. Anne never believed this. To her, he had died of a broken heart, slain, as it were, out of hand by the fatal letter which had parted them.

It will be easily seen what place I, as the deliverer of the letter, must have held in Anne's regard. I had no illusions about it myself and expected indeed never to see my stepsister again. But once more this bewildering woman surprised me. One morning, shortly after Anne had left the nursing home, my mother informed me that she was coming "home."

A man is at a loss in a situation such as this. The only thing for him to do is to admit a large ignorance of women. That Anne should care to live under the roof that sheltered me seemed fantastic. Yet that was her deliberate choice. The reason given, my mother's failing health, was natural and generous in the extreme. Too natural and too generous, I thought, since Anne was neither the one nor the other. Besides, she had never cared for my mother. Why the sudden solicitude?

To have asked this question aloud would have seemed unforgivable. Especially in the face of my mother's pleasure in this belated display of daughterly devotion. She took it all at its face value, shaming my doubts into uneasy silence and finally disposing of them altogether. This happened all the more easily because, at the time, I was going through a tremendous experience of my own. I had fallen in love. No one knew it. I had scarcely realized it myself, but since I had met Claire Ottway, the old, old glamour had laid its spell upon me and I saw everything through its happy mists.

Then, one day, something—a mere trifle—awakened me. I saw what I had permitted. But it was too late. I cannot tell you even now just what had happened, for the hardest part of all was that I never knew. But suddenly I knew my mother changed. There had always been between us a delightful trust and affection. Not, perhaps, one of those nervously intense devotions of which one reads, but a normal, healthy love which we took as much for granted as the air we breathed. Well, it is possible for air to be poisoned, and something had poisoned my mother's love and trust. I could not find out what it was. Anne, now firmly installed in the sick room, saw to it that I had small opportunity. You can imagine my helpless rage—rage which I dared not display for fear of exciting the invalid. Anne had stolen my mother from me and I could do nothing. I could not even prove that I had a grievance. It was all intangible, a thing of instinct and secret knowledge. I knew—without being able to tell what I knew, nor why.

Even my new-found love was in eclipse during those weeks when I saw my mother die without a lifting of the cloud between us. In her last look lay a reproach to which I had no clue and which remained forever unanswered. The experience was a spiritual horror which, undeserved as I swear it to have been, was to haunt my life for years.

Immediately after my mother's death Anne went abroad. She knew nothing of Claire, and I, with a suddenly developed caution, took care that she heard nothing from me. Even Claire herself never knew why it was that our wedding was hurried and almost secret. But the fact is that I was afraid. When Claire was safely mine I breathed again, and very soon I was able to laugh at my former anxiety. Anne, when at last the news reached her, had, apparently, been well pleased. She sent Claire a sisterly letter and a very handsome gift, coupled with a hope of seeing us happily settled sometime in the future. From something in the letter, I gathered that she had been ill again, but was now recovered. This letter was suitably acknowledged and the correspondence dropped. Once in a long time some word of Anne came to us at second or third hand, but, from herself, we heard nothing more until time had had plentiful opportunity to smooth old scars.

A HAPPY married life gives quick burial to unpleasant memories. A few years found me dismissing my suspicions of Anne as morbid and exaggerated. A few years more, and I scarcely thought of her at all. I had been married for thirteen years and was as happy as a man can be when, one day, a short but pleasant note from Anne informed me that she had returned from her latest wandering and, being in our part of the country for a time, would, if agreeable, pay us a short visit. . . .

I find it almost impossible to write about this visit, especially now that recent events have made it once more so terribly near and vivid. I am distracted by the difficulty of separating fact from fear, and suspicion from certainty. I realize that any evidence drawn from anything which I can tell would be utterly valueless in a court of law. If I say that all my old doubt of Anne sprang to life again at the first moment of her appearance in my home, I must also say that I can bring forward no fact to justify it. If I say that I was afraid, with a growing fear, during all her stay, I must add that, if acts alone are to be taken as evidence, every act of hers gave me the lie. What she *did* was generous and full of apparent good will. She showered gifts upon the children and upon Claire—to whom she seemed to be much attracted. So when I say that, through it all, I was conscious of a cold and deadly hatred—who will believe me? Only those who felt it, too.

I need not, indeed I cannot, go into the tragedy which brought that ill-omened visit to its close. Nor will the bare statement that my wife and prematurely born child came to their deaths through a fated gift from her mean anything to those who demand facts. There was nothing to be said then. There is nothing to be said now.

Once more time was allowed to do his soothing work. My children were growing up. The world around was sane and healthy and commonplace. Once again, I came to see morbidity in myself as a ground for causeless suspicion. Fate, not Anne, had been the cause of my misfortunes. But a man must make the best of fate. I hoped that Anne and I would never meet again. Nor did we seem likely to. She traveled a great deal—a continual restlessness seemed to possess her. The promise of her youthful days never matured. Neither, so far as I know, did she ever again show interest in any man. Indeed, her enduring memory of her one lover was shown in the very beautifully sculptured monument which she imported from Italy and placed upon his grave. As I grew older I understood more clearly—or thought I did.

The letter announcing her intention to pay us a second visit was utterly unexpected—and very unwelcome. Although I had come to smile at the idea of fear in connection with an aging and unhappy woman, I had no desire to open up old wounds. But the note gave me small choice. She was in poor health; the doctors recommended quiet and country air. What could I do?

I bitterly regret that I did not heed the instinct which told me to do anything, no matter how outrageous, to prevent this visit. But so largely are we creatures of convention, so high are the barriers with which we bar out instinct, that I let things take their course—nay, worse, I opened my doors once more to that Evil Thing.

But I must control myself—ranting will not help.

I shall endeavor to answer Detective Wiggan's questions. Yes, it is true that I have been at a loss for ready money of late. A certain investment in oil stock has proved unsound. But I have not been unduly worried. It is also true (although I did not know of it until after the tragedy) that my son has not on hand the sum of money which we had set aside for his entry into the partnership which we hoped would secure his future. But this, too, is a minor evil. Had William confided in me, a way would certainly have been found to provide this money. No sacrifice would have been too great—he knew that.

In conclusion—I am not a fool. I see the trend of things here. I see William's danger. That Anne foresaw it, I am convinced. I believe she died happy in the knowledge of the dreadful legacy she left.

(*Signed*) ROBERT MARSHALL.

WILLIAM MARSHALL'S STATEMENT

I CAN'T help noticing that, though Sergeant Wiggan has asked every one else in the house to write down their impressions of what happened at the time of Aunt Anne's death, he has carefully refrained from asking me to write down mine. The inference is almost too obvious—it leaps to the eye. I must say nothing—lest what I say may "be used in evidence against me." Nice idea to ponder over—that! Frankly, I believe the idiot thinks I did it!

All the same I am going to write down a few things for my own benefit. With all this questioning and conjecturing and general excitement, I find myself getting hazy on the main facts already. There aren't many of them and they seem clear enough —or did until this Wiggan chap began to stir things up. The trouble is that while I can state the facts, I can't explain them, and that is why this little policeman is getting on my nerves. It isn't a bit pleasant to have him poking around, expecting every minute to pounce upon some bit of evidence which will justify his official conscience in arresting me for the murder of my own aunt.

There! I've got it off my chest. This chap really does intend to arrest me. I can see it in his eye and feel it in the tone of his voice every time he speaks to me. It is a sort of mingled admiration and contempt—the kind of feeling I can fancy him having for a "slick one" who was doing rather well in "putting it over." He isn't sure, though —that's the point. He doesn't want to come a cropper (and he knows I can't get away).

I suppose I ought to feel uneasy. I know dad does, and Gwen—although she's such a brick. Cousin Fanny, so far, is more annoyed than frightened and Roberta is much interested and rather enjoying the whole affair. My own chief feeling seems to be a kind of helpless rage alternating with a state of mind which refuses to see anything but a certain grim humor in everything. If it were a man I was suspected of killing, if there had been a row and I had punched some one's head a bit too hard, the case might be serious. Under those circumstances I might even suspect myself. But to be accused of slipping poison into the milk of an old lady with indigestion is just a little too thick.

Well, to get on with it! When I heard

that our long absent aunt was coming to visit us, it seemed as if Providence were at last going to take an interest in my case. My memories of Aunt Anne's previous visit were mostly memories of gifts bestowed. There had been a rocking-horse with real hair, a football, a jointed fishing-rod and sundries. All these had lingered happily in my mind while Aunt Anne herself had faded out. But it was easy to take for granted that an aunt who understood the needs of a boy's higher nature so well was a jolly fine aunt to have.

Let me be quite brazen and admit that, from the very first, I intended to stick Aunt Anne for a loan. Why not? A loan is a perfectly legitimate transaction between—shall we say?—labor and capital. Aunt Anne was capital and I had every intention of becoming labor. There was practically no risk about it. I took for granted that she would know I wouldn't ask her if there had been.

I am quite sure that Sergeant Wiggan would cough here and say, "How about a bank?" The answer is simple. A bank is not an aunt and requires more security than confidence in a beloved nephew. The natural person to approach would have been, of course, dad. If he had had the money, I should not have hesitated for a moment, and neither would he. There is no irate parent business about dad. He knew all about what might be called a rather thin crop of wild oats and he knew, too, that there was no fear of another one. But he did not know quite how expensive it had been and I did not want him to find out if I could help it. He would have insisted upon raising the wind somehow. So I had to sheer off dad.

AUNT ANNE was a very different case. She had money—oodles of it; more than she could ever use. No doubt, lending money was one of her recreations. And I was determined that she shouldn't lose a cent of any capital she invested in me.

Even now, with the unwinking eye of Wiggan upon me, I can't see anything wrong with that idea.

The first damper upon my satisfaction was the general attitude adopted by dad. Whenever I made a cheerful remark regarding our rich relative he looked at me as if I had gone off my head. And once he said, "I know you are joking, William, but just in case you aren't, remember this—there is nothing to expect from your Aunt Anne." There was a certain quiet emphasis on the "nothing" which worried me—until I remembered the horse with the real hair. You can't call a horse like that nothing.

A day or two of Aunt Anne's company sent my hopes soaring. It was evident that she liked me. And I liked her. I make this statement with no reservations. I had been prepared to like her with that sort of family liking which is really just tolerance but I found that I liked her much more than that. The others didn't. I often felt like smacking Roberta and I nearly quarreled with Gwen. As for father—I couldn't understand him at all. There seemed no reason for the general coolness. To me, with the exception of one little dust-up, Aunt Anne was always what one might expect an aunt to be—not gushing, but friendly and interested. She was fond of walks, too, and simply loved taking bird photographs. Most people have not the necessary patience. But she had, and we got some cracking good ones.

Was it any wonder that I thought she would help me? Or did my natural conceit lead me astray? No, I don't believe it did. I honestly believe that her attitude justified my expectation. In those cozy, semi-confidential chats which we had when I sat with her while she drank her milk at night, she must have got a fairly good idea of the hole I was in. If she had not intended to pull me out, why did she not say so plainly and at once?

Gwen warned me that I was being "played." But I couldn't see how Gwen could know anything about it. I've noticed that when one woman doesn't like another, she's almost always prejudiced. I felt that Gwen wasn't seeing straight.

And it was because I was so sure of it that my disillusion came with such a shock. My surprise and disappointment were so great that I certainly lost my temper badly. That was the night when aunt and I had what little Wiggan calls our "difference." I admit that I was wholly in the wrong. Aunt had a perfect right to refuse to lend me anything and I had no right at all to resent it. It was the *surprise* of the thing! I have tried to impress this on Wiggan. But he doesn't seem to value the psychological bearing of surprise.

Aunt did not make her refusal easy, either. I can feel myself grow hot even now when I remember her sneering voice and some of the things she said. It was as if she had turned into another person under my very eyes. Have you ever seen some bounder coax a friendly dog to him and then lash out at him with a cane? I felt like that friendly dog. I wanted to rush away and hide. There was a sense of humiliation which was worse than anything. In fact I had turned to leave the room without a word when a parting sneer from her brought back with a rush an understanding of the way she had led me on, and this loosened my tongue. I can't remember what I said but I know that my voice was out of control—loud and high, as Cousin Fanny says.

Aunt let me make a fool of myself without interruption. I'll swear there was even a look of satisfaction on her face. It was that look, I think, which brought me to. I begged her pardon and got out of the room. In the hall I ran against Cousin Fanny. I knew she must have heard but I simply couldn't explain and she, like the good sport she is, pretended that nothing extraordinary had happened and that I had been trying to persuade Aunt Anne to have a doctor.

I went to my room, simply hating myself. It does jar a fellow to know that he has acted like an ill-bred child. All night I kept thinking of how I should have behaved, of the few dignified words I might have spoken, and so on. And it is true enough that I felt anything but kindly toward Aunt Anne—not because she had refused me the loan but because she made me wish so heartily that I had never asked for it. You simply can't like people who smash up your self-respect like that.

NEXT day I decided to act as if nothing had happened. I'm not sure that any one can ever do this, but I was determined to try. So, instead of giving in to my impulse to avoid Aunt Anne altogether, I called in at her room as usual before I went down to breakfast. I suppose I looked sheepish enough. She was sitting up in bed, in her dressing jacket and cap, and seemed none the worse for last night's excitement.

"I am sorry about last night, aunt," I said, "I hope you will forget it if you can."

Her strange black eyes passed over me as if I were some unfamiliar creature.

"I have an unusually good memory, William," she said. "Still, it is always well to know the truth about people. It prevents mistakes—or at least, it allows one to rectify them. Save for last night, I might have remained unaware of your mercenary spirit. I intend to change my will immediately. I hope you thoroughly understand."

I did, of course. And the mistake she was making seemed more childish than ever. I hadn't thought or cared about the will at all—it was only my immediate needs which had bothered me. So, if she expected another outburst, she must have been disappointed. The news about the change of will left me quite cold. In fact, I think I smiled a little.

"I am glad," she said, "that it amuses you."

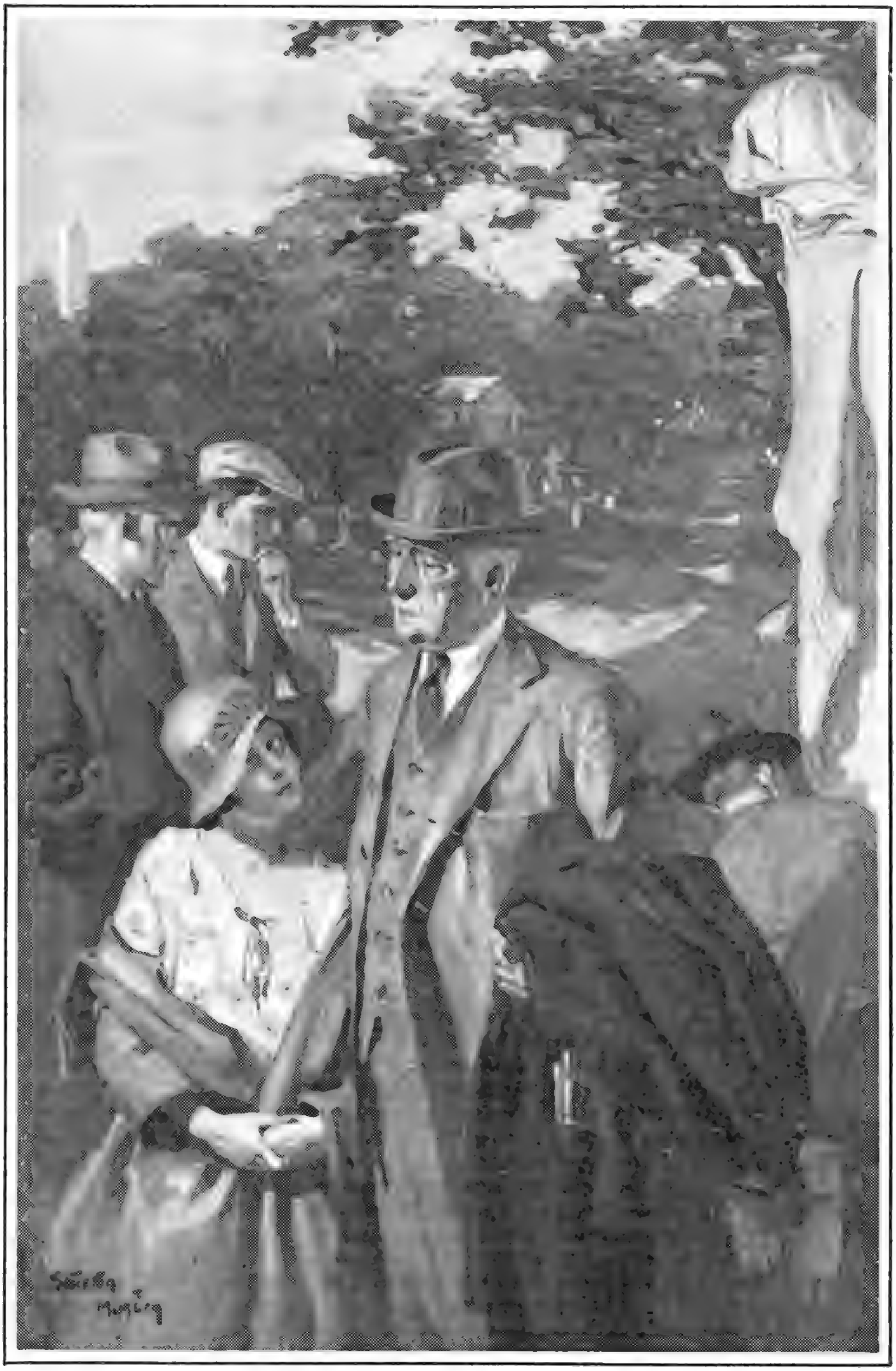
Now there is nothing in that sentence, is there, to send a chill of cold distaste up one's spine? Yet that is the effect it had on me.

When I told Gwen what had happened, she proved once and for all that she was the only girl. She never once either said or looked "I told you so."

The rest of the day was much as usual. In the afternoon I drove Gwen home and came back to moon around, wishing she had not gone. Cousin Fanny told me that Aunt Anne seemed better and also mentioned, in a stage whisper, that she had sent Jimmy the chore boy to the post with a letter and parcel which it was evident she had not cared to trust to the desperate hands of Gwen or me. The parcel might have been anything, but I guessed quickly enough that the letter would have contained instructions to her lawyer. The whole thing seemed like a page out of Ethel M. Dell. Cousin Fanny's attitude of intense yet restrained sympathy was rather funny, too.

At dinner we were all somewhat out of form. Dad was worrying about aunt's health and I was worrying about his and the probable effect upon him of the financial tangle which I would soon have to disclose. Cousin Fanny was probably worrying about us both. As I passed her chair she whispered that, if I liked, she would take up aunt's milk at ten.

Supposing I had let her do it—as I was jolly well tempted to do? Supposing I had never touched the dashed milk that night? Would Detective Wiggan have suspected Cousin Fanny? I believe he is capable of



Slowly and almost without sound, the figure moved turned gently upon its base and stopped. But where its feet had stood was now a cavity.

even that. However, I did not let her. It would have seemed too babyish. When the time came I prepared the milk myself, being careful to have it properly hot, and took it up to aunt's room.

SHE looked to me as if she had not stirred since the morning. She was still sitting up in her cap and jacket. Only the expression of her eyes was different. I wish I had understood and could interpret what the new expression meant. But it was beyond me. All I can say is that she looked excited. If it didn't sound silly, I would add that she looked triumphant. The impression was so strong that, as I set the milk down, I said, "Had any good news, aunt?"

Instantly she let her eyelids fall and her face became as expressionless as putty. She began to stir her milk without answering.

"Did Nora prepare this milk?" she asked.

I said that Nora was out, a fact which she must have known, and that I had heated it myself. At that she smiled—at least her lips smiled. She did not raise her eyes.

"You had better drink it while it's hot," I added. But she went on stirring.

I waited, hardly knowing what to do, for hitherto she had always asked me to sit with her while she drank it.

"Anything else, aunt?" I said.

I caught a glimpse of her eyes then—perhaps it was some reflection of light, but they seemed full of an odd glitter.

"I think that will be—quite all," she said. There was a stumble in her words as if she were short of breath.

I said good night, and went away. Next morning it was found that she had died in the night.

It was a very nasty shock. Dad blamed himself fiercely for not insisting upon a doctor, even against her will. And all our consciences were asking us uncomfortable questions as to whether or not we might have done more. But not one of us suspected anything out of the ordinary until we saw the doctor's face after he had made his examination. He was a thin, lank person with suspicious eyes (not our own family doctor), and he made no bones at all about refusing a certificate.

"But why?" asked dad, in complete bewilderment.

The doctor frowned importantly and was understood to say that he was not satisfied as to the cause of death.

"You suspect something unusual?" asked dad.

"Unusual—er—yes," said the doctor.

"Such as—" I suggested.

"That I will not say—at present."

Of course no one but an idiot could have misunderstood. It brought us all up standing.

"Suicide?" asked dad in a peculiar voice.

"That—or something else," said the doctor. He had a very dry manner.

It was only then that we began to realize what we were in for.

I HAVE been trying, at intervals, to see things as the doctor or the detective or any one not biased by acquaintance with the family might see them. Here is a middle-aged lady, unattached, with a large independent fortune. She visits a half-brother whom she has not seen for years and while in his house dies suddenly of poison. Her death occurs just in time to prevent her changing a will which makes her nephew her heir. Upon investigation it is found that said nephew is in financial difficulties; that he knew of his coming disinheritance; that he had quarreled with his aunt over money; that it was his nightly custom to carry up his aunt's bedtime drink of hot milk; that for some days the aunt had been unwell; that she had died suddenly upon the night after the quarrel.

It is all there, you see, the part of the villain as neatly mapped out as anything in fiction. Only one objection occurs to me—does it not presuppose that the villain was also simple-minded? Why quarrel, for instance? Why carry up the poisoned milk himself? Was the man a fool? I asked this question of Detective Wiggan but all he said was, "They mostly are." Another consideration which ought to have weight, I think, is the past history and general disposition of the suspect (me). If the latter has been generally law-abiding, if he shows no secret vices or predisposition to deeds of violence, this ought to count. But Wiggan says no. "You can't go by any of that," he said. "Some of the worst is mild as milk."

Take, then, the all-important question of motive. I need money, it is true, but I could rub along without it. When my difficulties became pressing, a mortgage arranged (with utmost cheerfulness) by my father would meet the case. I have admitted that I was extremely anxious to avoid this but it is what eventually would have been done and, perhaps, a mortgage which he is sincerely anxious to pay off may not be a bad thing for a young man who has taken life too easily. Certainly it would seem, even to a warped mind, to be preferable to murder. Looked at in this light, the police suspicions seem distinctly thin. But will people generally look at it in this light?

The most apparent alternative is that of suicide. Did Aunt Anne poison herself? It is possible. She may have taken the arsenic deliberately or in mistake for something else. I wish I could honestly say that this seems probable, but I must admit that what evidence there is seems to be against both suppositions. It appears that the only medicine which she was taking could not have been mistaken for arsenic—there being not the faintest resemblance between them. Nor is there a trace of arsenic anywhere in her room or among her belongings. Had she taken a dose by mistake, the paper or bottle from which she had taken it would almost certainly have been found. Even in the case of deliberate self-poisoning, traces of such paper or bottle would have been expected. There were none. The only exterior trace of the arsenic was the slight trace found in the dregs of the milk.

However, in the case of deliberate suicide, she *might* have made away with all traces. But is there any evidence to suggest that Aunt Anne was tired of life? If my own life were dependent on it, I could not swear that there was, nor could any of the rest of us. All her conversations with me had the future for a theme. She was full of plans. Her mild indisposition, which she attributed to indigestion, seemed to bother her very little. Her last directions to Nora were directions for the packing of her trunks. Her last letter (the one to McGregor) shows that she expected to see him soon. Are these things natural in a woman determined on suicide? I don't have to ask Wiggan that question. My own common sense answers it.

DID, then, anything happen unexpectedly that night which suddenly changed her whole outlook and led her mind to self-destruction? If so—what? I put this to the sergeant and he told me that the idea did me credit. I am afraid that the sergeant is not suggestible. In fact it is plain that only one thing puzzles him now. Where did the arsenic come from? Who purchased it, and where? He can't help admitting that, even if the remaining portion were destroyed, there ought to be traces of the destruction. (There always are in books: burnt paper, broken glass, or something.) Also it should be possible to trace the purchase. If Detective Wiggan had the slightest clue to either of these problems, he would be much easier in his mind. If he could trace either clue to me, he would be satisfied. My present freedom rests upon the fact that no poison, nor trace of the purchase of any such, has been discovered anywhere. But Wiggan has confidence in his own ideas. He is sure that some such trace exists. He is still searching.

I have tried to reassure dad. I have explained that, as I never bought any poison anywhere, even Detective Wiggan cannot prove that I did. As for finding in my possession something which I do not possess, that also seems fairly impossible. But dad just looked at me in a gloomy way.

"Your aunt was a very clever woman," he said. But when I asked him to explain, he changed the subject.

He is brooding over something. He doesn't talk freely—dash it! Nobody talks freely! I am beginning to have a horrible sense of suppression everywhere. I feel as if I weren't getting enough air. I wish Tony Seldon were here—he would enjoy this. A puzzle didn't suppress him, it was his meat and drink. I wonder—Jove! It's a good idea. He'll be some one to talk to, anyway, and he'll come like a shot if he scents a mystery. Besides, he and I were by way of being rather thick—he'd like to help. Yes—if this thing grows more serious I'll send for Tony!

(*Signed*) WILLIAM MARSHALL.

LETTER FROM WILLIAM MARSHALL TO ANTHONY SELDON

DEAR TONY:

Have you forgotten that once I saved your life? It was the time you threatened to overeat on jam-filled crullers. You weren't grateful at the time, but you may have been since. How would you like to do me a similar service now?

Hang it, I can't take this thing seriously! But it looks serious enough—and the plot thickens. They have found the arsenic. (They always refer to it as "the," meaning, I suppose that there is no other.) And they have found it in my "possession"—or, to be exact, in one of my plate-holders. You know my fancy for using a plate camera.

How it got there is a complete mystery—to me, I mean. I have heard of evidence being "planted" by detectives, but, honestly, Wiggan doesn't strike me as a planter. He seems straight. All the same, I fancy that my arrest is perceptibly nearer. I am under surveillance, of course.

Is it possible to prove that a man did what he did not do? There are moments when I entertain a dreadful suspicion that it is.

Will you come? I had intended sending for you anyway and your letter of yesterday, written after you had digested the reports of our family mystery in the papers, has made me feel doubly free to do so. Dad wants a private detective—two, three private detectives! But, outside of books, I have small faith in such. They are usually bounders—the kind you read about simply doesn't exist. What I seem to want is some one who knows me and knows that I don't murder aunts in my off hours.

I'd better warn you, though, that dad refuses to take any stock in that "sixth sense" of yours. I told him how we all swore by it at college and some of the astonishing things which came of your "hunches," but dad is far too scientific to be reasonable. I had to get really serious before he would consent to let me base my hopes on you; so if he looks a bit grim don't mind. As for me—I'll back your hunch every time.

Yours (in the toils of the law),
BILLY.

STATEMENT OF ANTHONY SELDON

IT IS not every day that a man finds a perfectly good friend accused of murder. Murderers, real ones, have friends, I suppose. One sometimes reads in the public prints that "the prisoner's friend appeared much moved." But, usually, one thinks of a murderer as an unattached entity, solitary, marooned, as it were, on the desert island of his crime. To become aware of such suspicion attaching to a person one knows, is an experience. I can conceive of it being a tragedy. But, with Billy Marshall as the police "suspect," the thing seemed to approach sheer farce.

You would have to know Billy to appreciate this, so I will not labor the point further than to say that the victim himself felt the same way. He seemed to have the idea that he was having a fantastic dream from which he would wake up soon. When I walked into his room at Vinecroft, the day after receiving his invitation to come, he had the air of one who has received a blow in the dark and expects another. Otherwise, he was as usual. His good looks were still aggressively good and his tie and socks still matched. We looked at each other soberly for a moment and then:

"I say—funny, isn't it?" said Billy.

"Very amusing," I agreed.

"If only other people would see the fun!" said Billy plaintively.

I admitted that this was important.

"But I'm depending on you for that, you know," said Billy. "Have you had a 'hunch' yet?"

He sounded so trustful that I hated to dash his hopes but it had to be done.

"If I have," I said, "I'm afraid it is not a hunch which is going to help you much. Hunches aren't evidence. To ask a question more to the point, is it true that they have really found arsenic in your plate-holder?"

Billy said that they really had. "A thin flat packet done up in yellow paper in the place where the plate ought to be."

"Did you say yellow paper?"—in surprise.

"Why not?" asked Billy.

"Did you ever know a druggist to use yellow paper?"

Upon reflection, Billy wasn't sure that he had, but, upon further reflection, couldn't say that he hadn't. "Although, as it probably wasn't the druggist who put it in the plate-holder," he added, "I don't see that it matters much."

"How did the sergeant come to find it?" I asked.

"Oh, he opened the holder. The slide was turned to 'Exposed,' but that didn't stop him. In the pursuit of his business, that man would just as soon spoil a negative as not."

"Was there a plate in the other side of the holder?"

"Yes."

"Anything on it?"

"I don't know. The bounder opened that side, too. But I think it was a blank plate. I have developed all the negatives I have taken lately. This plate-holder was an extra one which I seldom use, although I always keep plates in it."

"Then you are sure that, until the arsenic packet took the place of one of them, there were two plates in the holder?"

"As sure as I can be of anything of which I have no definite memory. I certainly would not load a holder on one side only."

"Any trace of the plate which must have been removed?"

"How could any one tell one plate from another? There is a box in the dark room half full of broken and cast-off plates—all light-spoiled of course."

"Any fingerprints?"

"Yes—on the holder—mine, of course. But not a trace of anything on the packet itself."

"That's unfortunate."

"Yes, it was quite a blow to Wiggan. If he had found my prints on that packet, I wouldn't be sitting here now."

"But if he had found some one else's fingerprints—"

"That would have been a greater blow still. However, he didn't."

"Any success in tracing where the packet came from?"

"No, but the sergeant is hopeful. He is the most infernally hopeful man I ever met."

"Well, you had better let me have the full tale."

MY CLIENT sighed. (I like to call him my client, because he is the first client I've ever had. Things are very quiet in the law business.) He said that he had told that tale so often that he could hardly tell it straight any more—so great was the impulse toward introducing a little variety. However, he had written it all down with due regard to strict veracity and I could use the manuscript for reference. In the meantime he would do his best. I listened to what he had to say in growing consternation. It was so evident that he was telling all he knew—and what he knew was so little. For a man facing a capital charge it practically amounted to nothing. He read my dismay in my face.

"It is rather meager, isn't it?" he said. "But I was so hoping you would have a hunch."

"I'm a full-fledged lawyer now," I said pointedly. "And I don't have hunches. I may have 'psychic intuitions,' sometimes—but I keep them dark. Nobody with any sense believes in such things. You and I may, because we haven't any sense anyway—and besides, we've seen them work; but men like your father laugh at them because they know so much and men like Wiggan laugh even louder because they know so little. So there we are."

"I don't care where we are," cried Billy, "as long as you've had a hunch. Let's go and tell Wiggan."

I restrained him. I had no desire to begin my investigation by adding to the gaiety of detective sergeants, for I had learned, through several humiliating experiences, that while the general attitude toward this harmless, and sometimes useful, eccentricity of mine may vary, it always includes amusement, and never includes respect—not until afterwards, anyway. I can't blame people for this. I should feel the same, if the faculty belonged to some one else.

Even in myself I do not pretend to be on good terms with it. I know that I have it and that is about all. Put briefly, it appears to be a scent for puzzles and mysteries which sometimes dispenses with the usual conscious train of reasoning and gives me the solution of a problem which, as a problem, I may not understand at all. College boys are not afraid of making fools of themselves, so at college there was no need to seclude this outlawed faculty of mine. It became, in fact, locally famous under the pleasing name of "Seldon's Hunch."

Billy knew of this, of course. It explains why he sent for me and why I had come. For, in reading the story of the Vinecroft mystery in the daily press, a feeling concerning the truth of the matter had come to me so strongly that I could do no less than write to Billy at once, offering my help should anything serious develop. I did not know what form my help could take.

"BILLY," I said, "what is your own conclusion about your aunt's death?"

"I don't know," said he miserably. "Since there is no one here to kill her, she *must* have killed herself. But how or why, I cannot even imagine. And the authorities simply refuse to entertain the idea of suicide."

"Nevertheless," I said soberly, "the authorities will have to entertain it, for it is true. Your aunt did kill herself. I am absolutely sure of it. I *know* it. But at present I can't offer a scintilla of evidence to prove my knowledge."

Billy's face fell. "If that's your hunch, Tony, they'll never believe it," he said wearily. "They've gone all over that—and all the evidence points the other way."

"We've got to find some evidence that doesn't."

Billy merely shrugged.

"All the same," I pointed out, "your own attitude shows how unwise it would be to say anything at present. You see, the peculiar thing about what you call a 'hunch' is that you've got to believe in it despite appearances. Do you remember the case of Judson Junior?"

My client's gloom lightened. But only for a moment.

"Yes," he said. "But Judson Junior was only suspected of sneaking the footer money—not of polishing off his aunt."

"What he was suspected of makes no difference. What I want you to remember is that the evidence was so strongly against him that practically no one had any doubt of his guilt."

Billy admitted that this was true. "And everybody said you were crazy," he added, "when you declared that the real thief was that mild little Soams chap. I don't understand yet how you found out."

"Well, that's the point: I didn't find out. I simply knew that Soams was guilty. I never did know how he managed it. But I could have proved it in time, if he hadn't grown panicky when I accused him and confessed. There is something about absolute knowledge which gives confidence and brings results. We've got to hang on to that and not be discouraged if everything doesn't clear up at once. As long as one is only guessing, one may be thrown off the track; but when one *knows*, it is different."

"And you don't think it is any use talking to Wiggan? That chap is getting on my nerves."

"Oh, I'm going to talk to Wiggan, all right. But I'm not going to tell him that your Aunt Anne killed herself until I can prove that she did. What I may or may not know is nothing in Wiggan's young life—the only knowledge which matters to him is knowledge which he can prove before a jury. It's up to us to give him that. Where is he now?"

Billy relaxed into a rueful grin. "Usually he's like Peter Pan's shadow, sewed on," he told me, "but at present he's in the dark room hunting more arsenic. But I want you to meet the family first."

They were, I think, waiting for us, and the meeting was uncomfortable enough. One glance at Mr. Marshall showed me that he, at least, was under no delusion as to his son's danger. It was also more than evident that he put not his faith in hunches. His manner to me was courteous but cold. Miss Fanny, a faded little lady with guileless blue eyes, showed worry, but her faith in the ultimate triumph of the right and proper had not yet been seriously shaken. Roberta, a keen-eyed imp of twelve, was belligerent and unafraid. Miss Herney, who had driven over and who was made known to me as "Gwen," was, I could see, a tower of strength to them all. Seeing them there in that pleasant drawing-room brought the sense of the strangeness of everything again uppermost. These were surely not the people to blunder into tragedy.

Yet tragedy was here and, after a few polite interchanges, Billy took me off to find it in the person of Sergeant Detective Wiggan.

He was busy, as had been surmised, in the dark room—a small, partitioned-off corner of the basement where the family developed its amateur negatives. Under the glow of its blood-red bulb any face might have taken on a sinister appearance; but no face could be really sinister which possessed cheeks so cheerfully round and eyes so mild and moonlike as Detective Wiggan's. When he saw us he came out into the more kindly light of the basement window.

"This is my friend, Tony Seldon," said Billy easily. (His manner as a suspect left much to be desired.) "He has come down to accelerate cerebration and his middle name is Holmes. In other words, he is going to help you hunt arsenic. No professional feeling, I hope?"

"You can run away now, child," I said coldly.

THE sergeant grinned and sat down upon a bench, dusting his hands upon a handkerchief which was none the better for it. I watched him with inward trepidation. It was my first encounter with a minion of the law in action. And in books the "regulars" are frightfully uppish and hard to do with.

"Private?" asked the minion genially.

I said: "No. Oh, no—not at all!"

"Specialist, maybe"—with an eye which observed me pityingly. "Psychologist, perhaps?"

I denied the imputation with spirit. "I'm not anything," I said, "except one of Billy Marshall's friends."

The sergeant sighed. "He'll need 'em," he said. "Better get down to a basis, though. What are you going to do?"

I said I didn't know, adding, with a flash of inspiration, "What are you?"

"I don't know, either," said Detective Wiggan. "That is to say, I don't *exactly* know." He had a very cautious manner. And his moonlike eyes were not communicative.

"Look here," I said suddenly. "I've got to help Billy. I don't know a thing about detecting but I've got rather a nose for puzzles and I want to use it. You see, I know that it wasn't Billy who did in his aunt. And the logical conclusion is—" I waited hopefully.

"The logical conclusion," he filled in slowly, "might be that you don't know Billy."

"Meaning?"

"Meaning that nobody knows anybody. I've found that out." His tone was full of the weariness of much knowledge.

I admitted that this might be true but added immediately that I knew it wasn't. I did know Billy and he was a nice boy in whom there was no guile. I related several instances of our college days to prove it. But the sergeant, though patient, was unimpressed.

"For myself," he admitted when I had finished, "I like your friend—clear blue eyes, fine nose; broad in the shoulder—reminds me of that Rodney Blake who shot his wife and buried her under a large coal pile. Unfortunately it was a hard winter. Yes, I've quite taken to young Marshall; but I never let my likings prejudice me. It doesn't do—not in our business." He included me with a flattering wave.

"But," I protested in dismay, "you can't mean that a person's obvious character should have no weight in considering a problem like this?"

The sergeant looked at me mournfully. "There isn't," he said, "any obvious character. I've found that out, too. Look at Tom Simmons, him that killed three fiancées at a go. Even the judge that sent him out couldn't hardly believe he'd done it."

I began to feel chilly. "Come out into the garden," I said. "This place depresses your spirits. You'll feel better presently. Do you mind if I ask a few questions?"

"Why should I?" asked Mr. Wiggan obligingly.

"IN BOOKS," I said, "the police force guards its knowledge like priceless pearls."

The moonlike eyes opened. "Does it?" inquired their owner, interested. "Fact is, I don't get much time to read. As for questions, I've asked a good few in my time. Maybe it will be a change to answer some."

"And you're not jealous?" I persisted, unable to adjust my mind to this unexpected attitude.

"What of?" asked the sergeant placidly.

I hadn't thought of that. But, after all, it was a pertinent question.

"Well, anyway, I'm glad you're not," I went on hastily; "because, if I'm going to help Billy, I'll need a lot of information. The arsenic, for instance. Have you connected it up in any way with—er—well, with any one whatever?"

The sergeant shook his head.

"No," he said, "at present, it's what you might call an isolated fact. We don't know where it came from—that is to say, we haven't got the man who sold it. And we don't know how it came to be where it was—meaning that we can't find any one who saw him put it there. But we've got the stuff and we got it in the possession of the chief suspect—you don't mind me calling young Marshall the chief suspect, do you?"

"For purposes of argument—no. And I see that you feel pretty sure that Billy put the poison in the plate-holder. You have considered, I suppose, that the holder was a spare one, that it was not in use. That other people might have had access to it, and that there were no fingerprints on the packet."

"I have—as you might say—considered those points," said Wiggan mildly.

"Now, if Billy bought that poison," I went on, "he must have bought it during a comparatively short time—since the beginning of his aunt's visit, to be exact. It ought not to be hard, with your resources, to trace all his purchases since the moment he heard the letter read at the breakfast table."

"It isn't," said Wiggan, adding, with something very like a yawn: "We have."

"And you found that he had purchased nothing," I declared triumphantly; "which means that he was not the man who bought the poison. No one knew that his aunt intended to make this visit. She had not bothered herself about her relatives for ten years. No one could have been prepared for her sudden arrival. Granting that her nephew, knowing of her wealth, began instantly to plan her removal, the earliest possible moment he could have set about his nefarious work would have been after he knew of her intentions."

"That," said Mr. Wiggan appreciatively, "is a very nice way of putting it. Looks kind of as if he must have had the stuff by him for some time."

"But—oh, that's idiotic! Why would a young fellow like Billy have arsenic 'by him'?"

"Rats, perhaps," suggested Wiggan. His eye was vague.

"*Are* there any rats?" I asked patiently.

"There might have been once—common things, rats."

"Not good enough, sergeant. You'd have to show that there were rats and that attempts had been made to poison them. Besides, no one uses pure arsenic for rats any more; therefore it looks—"

"As if he must have had it by him for something else," finished the sergeant with a sigh.

"Good heavens, man!" I burst out. "Why? Why?"

"Because he had it," said Wiggan slowly. "That's why—because he had it."

I abandoned the point and asked what kind of paper the arsenic had been wrapped in.

For answer my companion drew a scrap of paper from his pocketbook and handed it to me. "Same as that," he announced laconically.

"It's not drug-store paper—is it?" I asked.

"It might be."

"Hardly. This coarse yellow paper is seldom made in anything but large sheets. It's the kind of paper a dry-goods merchant would use. Druggists don't use paper a yard wide. The obvious inference is that the arsenic was removed from the drug-store packet and the original paper destroyed. Why?"

"Because he didn't want the arsenic traced," said Wiggan. "That's a very nice point."

"NONSENSE!" I said, appalled. "Don't you see that there might be another inference?"

"Such as?"

"Well, if it was desired only to destroy trace of purchase, it would have been enough to destroy the label, but if it was the *kind of paper* which was revealing, don't you see an inference there?"

"No," said the sergeant. He watched me benevolently while I made a note. But he appeared somewhat tired.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," he said in a burst of generosity. "I'll put you on a basis. Every one should be on a basis. I'll give you the written statements of all the family and you can go through them and point out all the inferences I've missed. Only you'll want to do it in private, of course. I'll go back and finish up the dark room."

As a hint this could hardly have been bettered. I retired to my room and to a long meditation—from which emerged a conviction that Detective Wiggan, though a man and a brother, was not going to be conspicuously helpful in my private detecting. It was evident that, as a confrère, he considered me negligible, and, as an amusement, easily exhausted. To new ideas he appeared impervious. He had made up his mind and would persevere in his way, searching, heaping up his little bits of evidence until—well, until he considered himself justified in "going to a jury." He was as good-natured as a nice bulldog and as implacable. Yes, if anything were done it would have to be done without Wiggan.

It was with a feeling of deepest gloom that I settled down to a reading of the manuscripts which Wiggan had promptly sent me by the hands of Nora the maid. Billy's case began to look perilous indeed.

I had not read far, however, before the sheer drama of the thing lifted me beyond reach of depression. The feeling of intuitive knowledge which had been so strongly with me as I studied the newspaper accounts returned with added intensity. Assurance became doubly, trebly sure; my brain tingled with it. And with assurance, as always, came hope. Man irresistibly inclines to the belief that truth will triumph. It was while reading Mr. Robert

Marshall's statement, I think, that I became conscious of yet another feeling—a sense of something abnormal which sent an unpleasant ripple up and down my spine. Horror as of something I had not yet faced and could not name shivered to the tips of my fingers. But, disturbing as it was, I welcomed it; for might it not be a clue in itself, a helpful indication that I must not expect to solve my problem along the usual simple and normal lines—that the root of the evil puzzle lay in deeper things?

It had not taken me long to read the statements and I immediately went back and read them all over again. This time I read, not for atmosphere, but for detail, making notes as I went, and bearing always in mind the solution of the problem offered by my inner consciousness. Billy came in before I had quite finished. The poor chap's expression was positively hunted.

"Say, old man!" he began with a kind of gulp. "I've got to ask you! You don't suppose I could have poisoned the aunt in my sleep, do you—or anything like that? Don't laugh—but really you know I've been talking to Wiggan and the beggar is deuced convincing." His tone was admirably light, but it wasn't fun that was in his eyes.

"DID you," I said sternly, "did you say anything to Detective Wiggan about a hunch?"

"Certainly not. At least, not exactly. But I asked him if he didn't think that people sometimes know things without being able to say why they know them."

"And he said—"

"He said that most people knew things that way. But he had found out that it didn't do—not in his business. You couldn't get down to any basis."

"Well, now perhaps you'll follow my advice and leave him alone until we have proof of the belief that is in us. We had better begin with these statements. I find various things here that strike me. They are all mixed up, at present, but each seems to have a significance which may be pieced together into some kind of theory."

"If Aunt Anne poisoned herself—"

"Not 'if,' Billy. We shall never get anywhere if we start with 'if.' She *did* poison herself. Get that firmly into your head. We work back from that. Now let us take the statements. The first thing which struck me was a certain remark of your engaging sister. She says, speaking of your aunt: 'I am perfectly sure she tried to make William like her and, if Detective Wiggan wants to detect anything, he ought to detect why.' Precisely! Now can you yourself give any guess as to this matter?"

"No, I can't," said Billy gloomily. "That is what puzzled me all along. But, supposing that she really did cultivate me deliberately, did she need to have a reason? Maybe it was just caprice."

"No, if she did it deliberately she did it with some purpose. Make a note of that and we'll pass on. . . . Another thing which is very apparent is the general impression of 'something wrong' with your aunt herself. Even the maids feel it. Nora sums it up as 'the evil eye'; Miss Herney, who, I fancy, is not given to exaggeration, uses such words as 'repulsive' and 'abnormal' to describe it and refers to an impalpable 'something' in your aunt's atmosphere as singularly forbidding. She notes also the curious 'glitter' in her eye. Your Cousin Fanny makes a still broader statement when she says there was '*something which tainted the air* like an evil fog or mist.' Now, of what known fact in your aunt's history, as given by your father, do these remarks remind you?"

The bothered look in Billy's eyes deepened but he answered at once: "I see what you mean. You are thinking of the streak of insanity in her mother's family. But there never was any hint of Aunt Anne being otherwise than sane. She was a clever, capable woman. She looked after all her own affairs. Except for her unusual fondness for travel, she appears to have shown no eccentricity. Certainly there has been no trace of anything worse."

"There hasn't? How do you know? It would seem from these statements that none of you know anything about your aunt. There is no word of where she went nor of what she did during her long absence abroad. The inference is that she did not keep her relatives informed. Also, at the time of your father's marriage, it is plain that she knew nothing about it. Why? Some correspondent would have been almost sure to have mentioned it. Was there no address? Or was your aunt not receiving mail at that time?

"There are other significant things, also.

Your father speaks of her brilliance at college and of the expectation that she would do 'serious work.' This expectation was never even partially fulfilled. Again, why? But there is something far more definite than either of these references. We find that after the breaking of her engagement Miss Crawford suffered from a 'nervous breakdown,' during which she was treated in a 'nursing home'—a home to which even your father's mother was refused admittance. This breakdown extended over a considerable period. What does it sound like?"

BILLY was visibly keen now. "By Jove, I believe you're right!" he exclaimed. "You mean that the nursing home was really a private asylum?"

"Perhaps not that, exactly. But some kind of mental hospital certainly. There are plenty of such retreats where patients, temporarily deranged, are restored to health."

"But if she were restored—"

"We must believe that she was—at least apparently so, for otherwise she could not have gone back to ordinary life. But there are many cases of relapse in cases like that. Whether her mania was of a recurrent kind, we do not know. But the continual trips abroad would lead one to suspect that it might be so. Where was she when your father was married? Somewhere where she received no news, evidently."

"It sounds reasonable."

"Well then, let us admit, just for purposes of argument, that your aunt has been at times the victim of a recurrent mental trouble inherited from her mother. It follows that there must have been long periods of apparent good health between. But it does not follow that this good health was as absolute as it appeared. I am not an alienist but I have heard some very learned arguments on this point. It is a point which seems to be by no means settled. One view which I believe is very definitely held argues that when, in such cases, the mental balance is disturbed by shock resulting in a 'fixed idea,' this fixed idea is liable to remain throughout the apparently normal periods as a more or less submerged, but occasionally powerful and often dangerous abnormality."

"You mean that she may have appeared quite sane and yet have been—anything but?"

"Something like that. She may have been sane in all ordinary matters, yet actuated, in some of her actions, by her fixed idea. That is to say, her conduct might have had every appearance of sanity, yet the motive directing it might have been quite insane. If this were so there must be traces of it. Let us examine the statements and see if we can find them. The first trace we have already tabulated. It is the effect she produced upon ordinary healthy people. To my mind there is no doubt that this was the direct reaction of her own abnormality. The masklike face and glittering eyes are physical symptoms also. But besides this what do we find?

"The first thing is the peculiarity of her action after leaving the nursing home that first time. Your father admits that he fully expected her never to speak to him again. She blamed him for the destruction of her one romance. She thought she had every reason to hate him and he was convinced that she did hate him. Yet she came of her own accord to live in the same house with him, devoting herself to his invalid mother, for whom, until this, she had shown no fondness. What was the motive here? Follow your father's statement carefully. He says, '*Suddenly I knew my mother changed*,' and farther on, '*Anne had stolen my mother from me*.' Are not these statements significant, taken in connection with our theory of the 'fixed idea'?

"Let us assume that the fixed idea was that of revenge or, as it would appear to her, of retribution—a sacred duty, perhaps. You must remember, here, that she never accepted the commonplace explanation of her lover's death but considered it to be the result of a broken heart. Suppose her shocked and sick mind to have seized upon the idea of 'a life for a life' and even more than that—suppose her fixed idea prompted her to pay her debt not only in full but doubled and trebled. Suppose this prompting, and remember that behind it was a keen, clever and patient brain for which the ordinary interests of life had no longer any interest, and what a perfect instrument you have for every kind of horror!"

I was speaking now more to myself than to Billy, who sat, wide-eyed, listening; and, with every word, the conviction that I was on the right track grew stronger. This, reason and instinct both told me, might well be the explanation of that sense of things bizarre and dreadful which had accompanied my first reading of the statement. I felt that I had my hand on the thread which would lead us out of the maze. If my manner became somewhat excited I think I may be excused.

"THE idea was fiendish in its simplicity," I went on. "First of all she struck at the mother. What does your father say? '*There had always been between us a delightful trust and affection.*' And yet before she died he had lost her as he never could have lost her by death alone. Anne had 'stolen' her—as he had stolen Anne's lover!

"What next? One would have suspected some interference with the love affair which followed. Your father himself was afraid of that. But it happens that Anne did not know of the prospect of marriage. She was again 'traveling.' Had there been another acute attack? That is something that with time and proper facilities we may be able to find out. The next we hear of her, she is coming home and is proposing herself as a visitor at the home of her half-brother and his adored wife—"

"Oh—horrible!" burst from poor Billy, who now saw what was coming.

"Horrible—but perfectly in keeping with the fixed idea. Once more she is the benevolent sister and generous aunt. She lavishes gifts—especially upon the pretty and happy wife— Well, old man, I won't stir up memories, for of course you know what happened. Undoubtedly your father had his suspicions then, suspicions so wild that in after days he was ashamed of them, even denied and forgot them. But at the time—read what Miss Fanny's statement says: '*Robert was beside himself, making the wildest accusations.*' We can imagine what those accusations were. But we must find out from him whether there was ever the slightest bit of evidence to give them ground."

"Oh, poor dad! How can we?"

"We must—if we are to save him from a still greater sorrow." (I said this meaningly.) "Anne Crawford's work was not done when the curtain rang down on that past tragedy. For a time she disappeared, the cat letting the mouse believe itself free, forgetting or disbelieving that it had ever been in the grip of cruel claws. Then, when peace and happiness had once more settled down upon her victim, she—proposes another visit."

"But that—oh, it's too dreadful, too fantastic! Things like that don't happen!"

"Not in a sane and normal world, perhaps—but in the world of an unbalanced brain they happen, logically and inevitably. That world knows no ruth and no remorse. Do you begin to see how things fit in now? The cloud which came over your home when this nemesis entered it—noticed and commented upon by all save you, the deliberately chosen and cleverly deceived victim?"

"But—why me?" asked Billy, heavily.

"You have only to look in your father's face to answer that. And I think that now, when it is too late, he understands her purpose only too well. Read the concluding lines of his statement: 'That Anne foresaw it, I am convinced. I believe she died happy in the knowledge of the dreadful legacy she left.' Taken by itself, how extravagantly wild this statement sounds! Now let us see what evidence there is to bear out this theory. We know that she made a friend of you; expected you to fetch and carry; made the bringing of her prepared milk a nightly custom; was interested in your interests and in your fads—"

"By Jove—the camera!" cried Billy, springing up.

"Quite so. How often, under cover of her interest in photography, has she handled your camera, your plate-holders?"

"Often," muttered Billy. "Dozens of times!"

"A plate-holder is a rather good hiding-place," I suggested, "—but not *too* good. A trained detective might very well examine the plate-holders of a young man addicted to amateur photography."

"Well, but—after all, you know it was herself she poisoned. Why not have poisoned me and be done with it?"

"PERHAPS," I said dryly, "anything as commonplace as mere poisoning would not appeal to your aunt. She seems to have had a nice taste in these things. To have killed your father's son out of hand would, no doubt, have been something, but to place him in the dock as the murderer of a helpless old woman—how much more? Besides, there may have been a contributory reason. You say that her health showed some signs of breakdown. The autopsy showed, according to the papers, that she had not long to live. What if she knew this—and wished to hasten things a little?"

"Two birds with one stone!" murmured Billy.

"Yes, and, having decided upon her final vengeance, how does she bring it about? First, she makes a will in your favor, then she invites your confidence and arouses in you an expectation which she does not intend to satisfy. A quarrel is the natural result. A quarrel with raised voices which some one in the household would be sure to hear. Meantime, she writes a letter expressing fears for her personal safety—a letter which, in the event of her death, would certainly lead to investigation. Meantime, she had carefully placed, with gloved fingers, the telltale packet of poison in a place where it will, in proper time, be found. She was clever, all right! It even occurred to her to change the paper in which the arsenic was wrapped. Undoubtedly she must have purchased the poison somewhere abroad and the finding of it wrapped in *foreign* paper might have turned a wise man's thoughts to her.

"Lastly, we have the final scene where she takes the cup of milk from your hand and, with veiled eyes, asks if Nora prepared it. Receiving your assurance that you prepared it yourself, she is unable to restrain the look of triumph, which even you were able to see and wonder at. She *was* triumphant. I doubt if, anywhere on earth, there was a more triumphant woman than your Aunt Anne that night."

Billy had turned his face away. "She—she wasn't—she was crazy," he stammered. (I liked Billy very much for that.)

I nodded and we sat silently for a moment. Then, with a long sigh, "What are we going to do about it?" asked Billy.

The question brought me down to brass tacks with a start. I had been so absorbed in tracing out what seemed to me so plain a trail that I had forgotten how profitless everything I had said would seem to—Sergeant Wiggan.

"I don't know," I admitted.

We looked at each other. There was an uncomfortable pause.

"If we can prove her to have been subject to fits of recurrent insanity," I offered, "it may help."

"Oh, yes! It may help to give me—what is it they call it?—'the benefit of the doubt.'"

"It may save your neck, anyway." I spoke sharply, for my nerves were frayed.

"Good heavens, man! What use would my neck be to me under those circumstances?" asked Billy mildly.

I felt ashamed of myself. "Oh, well," I said, "there must be a solution somewhere. If it's any consolation to you, I have a feeling that we'll find it. I don't see how, now. But I may see any moment. Or—I may not. I'm at the mercy of this curious extra sense of mine. But, thank Heaven, it seldom lets me down. In the meantime, we must just do what spade work we can. I'm going to have a talk with Miss Fanny and your father in the morning. And tonight, if I can have the car, I'm going to run over to interview this lawyer—what's his name?—McGregor. I don't suppose our friend Wiggan would let you go with me."

Billy shook his head. He looked utterly and forlornly miserable. "It's all so awful," he muttered. "My mother—I can't stop thinking about my mother."

"Think about your father just now," I advised. "He needs it more than she." Hoping that this might act as a needed tonic, I left him and went to see about the car.

AT THE offices of McGregor & Stokes, the senior partner was preparing to go home but he offered, willingly enough, to listen to what I had to say. I think he may even have been guilty of some curiosity, but, if so, it was a guilt which stopped short of betraying itself. Mr. McGregor was that embarrassing sort of person—a cautious Scot. One had only to look at his tight-lipped mouth to know that no information was likely to be lightly offered; on the other hand, his honest gray eye assured one of an incorruptible integrity.

I began by explaining that my sole purpose in seeing him was to secure any possible help which he might be able to offer for my friend Billy Marshall—of whose unenviable position he must be aware. He heard me with interest, and, I think, with a certain sympathy, but made no comment except an occasional nod and a cautious "There may be something in that."

"As things stand," I concluded, "I don't see that I can do anything except to ask you to take my word that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, I have certain strong reasons for believing that your late client killed herself. What is wanted is proof—facts which a jury will accept."

"Yes, you will be wanting that," said he. And, with a not unkindly smile, he sat back in his tip-tilted chair and waited patiently for me to go on.

"There are certain questions which I thought you might be willing to answer—with this object in view," I proceeded.

"There might," he admitted, and then, hurriedly, as one who has gone too far, "and there might not."

Finesse is useless with a man of this temperament. I saw that I should have to put my questions bluntly and trust to his good sense and justice for my information.

"Well, then," I began, "have you any reason to suppose, through your dealings with your client, that she was mentally unsound?"

Mr. McGregor pursed his lips. He seemed to take the question up and to turn it over critically. If it surprised him he gave no sign. Finally he said: "In all her dealings with me, it is my duty to say that my client gave every evidence of sound business judgment. Her affairs, which she managed largely by herself, are in the best of order."

"Yes," I said, "I can believe that. I should have worded my question differently. I should have asked you if at any time and for any reason you have had cause to suspect that Miss Crawford suffered from spells of mental abnormality."

"Yes," he said calmly, "I have reason to suppose that she did."

"Can you tell me on what you base your supposition?"

"I can," said Mr. McGregor, "and," with a burst of generosity, "I will. My supposition is based upon the fact that at various times since Miss Crawford has been our client, there have been various moneys paid from her estate for—er—treatment in—er—various homes where, as I could scarcely help ascertaining, cases of temporary mental trouble are specialized."

I felt a little flicker of satisfaction.

"Did you inform Detective Wiggan of this?" I asked.

"I did not. So far as my dealings with the authorities have progressed I have received no hint as to the question of Miss Crawford's mental health having been raised. It was considered sufficient, I gathered, that at the time of her death she was perfectly normal."

"Would you say it was normal for her to express fear for her personal safety while a guest in her brother's home?"

"Not knowing her brother nor the inmates of his home, I would say nothing at all."

"Oh, look here, Mr. McGregor," I said. "Be a little human! You know of these people even if you don't know them personally. Better, straighter folk do not live. Why, you might be the center of just such a family yourself. How would you feel if your son were suspected of a dastardly murder?"

"Being a bachelor, that would take some imagination." There was the beginning of a twinkle in the shrewd Scottish eyes. "But I take your point. The police, perhaps, are not as sympathetic as you could wish. Very low opinion of human nature, the police."

"Well, then," I proceeded, somewhat heartened, "what did you *think* when you read your client's letter expressing herself as being in actual fear of her life?"

"WHAT I thought has no value as evidence. But if you mean, 'Would the receipt of such a letter give me grounds for swearing against the probability of my client's sanity?'—I cannot say that it would. There *may* have been reasons which dictated that letter. In view of what followed it would logically seem that there had been reasons. You see that? Besides, I would have to bear in mind that I saw and spoke with Miss Crawford the day before she went upon that visit to her brother. The directions which she gave me upon that day, her admirable disposal of intricate matters of business, her general lucidity and calm would not lend such a supposition a leg to stand upon.

"And yet"—he suddenly abandoned his precise manner—"I did think the thing devilish queer! But the suggestion I got was not one of irrationality; quite the contrary. There was nothing irrational about that letter. It was a letter of purpose if ever there was one."

"You've got it!" I exclaimed excitedly. "But what purpose?"

"Well"—slowly—"she might have been really in danger and wishful to take precautions."

"She wasn't in danger. And, if she had fancied so, there was nothing on earth to prevent her leaving the house on the instant. She was quite well enough to travel, had there been reason. As for precaution—of what use to her would any action be *afterward?* No, she wrote that letter telling of a danger which threatened, yet she makes no movement for escape or protection, only for retribution. Why?"

"I don't know," said McGregor flatly. Then, after a silence and in a much less legal voice, "Do you?"

Now, up until this moment, I had not intended to tell this hard-bitten son of the law anything at all. I had thought such a course quite useless. But suddenly, as his voice changed in cadence, I remembered that he was Celt and that, with a true Celt, anything is possible. So, on the impulse, and not caring whether or not I should be called a fool for my pains, I told him the whole story, "hunch" and all—only I called the hunch "subconscious prompting."

When I had finished, he untilted his chair and solemnly opened a lower drawer in his desk from which he extracted a silver-tipped box hollowed from a small black horn.

"In business hours," said he, "I do not indulge. But upon occasion—" Even more solemnly he took a pinch of snuff. When the sneeze had subsided, he drew a long sigh. "Clears the brain," he said. "Wonderful thing, snuff."

He tilted his chair again but his eyes were no longer lawyer's eyes; they were the eyes of a Highlander whose forbears have looked long at distant hills.

"I have known of such things," he said slowly. "Yes, I have known of them. But not in the way of business, no."

"You believe me, then?"—eagerly.

"I would be neither believing nor disbelieving—but it may be there are such things." His chair came suddenly down with an ear-splitting rasp, and the dreamy light in his eyes went out. "Havers, man, havers! What nonsense is this for grown men?"

"I know," I said, somewhat shamefaced. "I know it's all no use without proof. But I'm out to get the proof. I came to you to help me."

He got up and took a turn or two around the room, a heavy concentration knitting his brows, and when he sat down again he put his finger unerringly upon the vital point.

"YOU are out to get proof," he repeated. "But what proof can you hope to get? Only one person in the world could provide that proof—and that person is dead."

I shook my head. "There is proof somewhere. I know it," I declared stubbornly. "I don't believe that this woman schemed vengeance all these years and left no record of it, anywhere. An enlarged ego is one of the characteristics of a mania such as hers. She would have been proud of her fine revenge, insanely proud of it. Cunning enough to force herself to silence while boasting would have threatened her plans, I am certain that there must have been an outlet somewhere, a confidant, a safety-valve—"

"Her diary!"

The words seemed to spring from the lawyer's lips involuntarily. But they were succeeded by a peculiar stiffening of his whole face, as if some sudden memory or inhibition had closed him up like a spring trap.

But the words were out! They ran through me like the wine of new life. A diary! Why had I not thought of that? Of course there would be a diary—the perfect confidant, the silent, ever-present safety-valve, the keeper of secrets. I fairly shook McGregor in my excitement.

"Man! Where is it?" I pleaded. But the illuminating moment had passed. The lawyer was all a lawyer once more.

"Where is what?" asked McGregor stolidly.

"The diary."

"You presume that there was a diary?" he asked politely.

"Haven't you just said there was?"

"To my knowledge I did not say it. An exclamation is not a statement, young man. It had occurred to me that there might have been a diary. That is all."

We looked at each other.

"It is not all—not by a long way," I said slowly.

He did not take offense. "If there is more, it is not within my knowledge," he said. "I have never seen a diary of Miss Crawford's, nor do I know that she ever kept one."

"And yet you were suddenly inspired for some reason to believe that she had kept one."

"Perhaps," said the Scot with a twinkle, "it was a subconscious prompting."

I thought quickly. To question further would only antagonize him. Whatever the reason was which lay behind his undeniable change of front, it could not be reached in that way. He had been sympathetic, disposed to help—was so still, probably. But it was plain that the significance of something had suddenly dawned upon him, and of that something he would not speak. Why? There could be but one reason. It must concern something about which he had given his word to be silent. My spirits rose at once. I felt more than ever assured that I was not following a blind trail. For if Miss Crawford's lawyer had something concerning Miss Crawford to conceal, that something must be the thing which we most needed to know.

"You mean that you have sworn an oath, I suppose," I said slowly.

"If I have, I am not likely to break it."

"Not even to save an innocent man from death?"

"I know of no innocent man in danger of death."

"That," I pointed out, "is a quibble, Mr. McGregor, and you know it. If Billy is committed for trial you will simply have to speak. But he isn't up for trial. I am as certain as you are that a diary exists. And if it exists I shall find it."

Was there a glint of pity in his grim eyes? I hoped not—pity from him would bode ill for my unaided chances.

"You'll understand," said the Scotsman, carefully, as I said good-by, "you'll understand that, speaking officially, I have no interest whatever in the havers we've been talking, but personally, and to the extent my conscience will permit, I wish you well."

"You couldn't be more guarded than that," I told him ruefully; "but you have already helped me a great deal and I thank you."

THAT night I had a brief but vivid dream. Dreams, I may explain, are not an unusual thing for me when working on a puzzle. It is as if my subconscious self has a very perfect knowledge of what I need to know but finds some difficulty in passing the knowledge on. It takes advantage, therefore, of every chance to push some tiny clue into my conscious mind. This is most easily accomplished during sleep, but though it may often happen, it is only once in many times that I retain any memory of it when I wake.

This time the memory was vivid. I was walking through a street in a foreign town—in Italy, I thought. Everywhere was blazing sunshine and dark blue shadow. Down a street, which sloped steeply, I caught a flashing glimpse of sea. Toward me, up the slope, a man was walking. He wore a smock, powdered with what appeared to be fine sand or dust, and a white cap covered his head. As he passed me, he said in a conversational tone, and as if answering a question: "Yes, it was made here. Within the hand of sorrow is the key."

The man passed on. The brilliant vision dissolved like smoke. For one instant I was aware of a great exultation—the next instant I was awake. The memory of the dream remained, but the interpretation, which had been almost mine, was already beyond my reach. I grasped at it frantically only to find it irretrievably gone.

Whether the dream itself would prove of any use it was impossible to say. But I went over it carefully, fixing it in my mind: a town in Italy; a man in a powdered smock; the words, "Yes, it was made here. Within the hand of sorrow is the key." Gibberish, at present, but, in the future—who could say?

I dropped off to sleep again, wondering what our canny Scot would have made of it.

IN THE morning the chief duty seemed to be a talk, first with Cousin Fanny, then with Mr. Marshall. The lady I discovered on the side terrace inducing her Persian cat to take more cream than was good for it. At the prospect of being questioned she was immediately in a flutter. So, instead of talking about her nephew, I began to talk about her cat. A beautiful animal, I said, but were not Persians very difficult to raise? Not at all difficult, declared Miss Fanny; it was merely a question of common sense and diet, exactly as with humans. How much better we would all be, for instance, if we could be brought to regard as barbarous the eating of veal and pork! "And beef?" I inquired. But it appeared that Miss Fanny was rather fond of a good steak and didn't see how a little beef could hurt anybody. She made a point of ordering it at least twice a week and I could see for myself how perfectly healthy every one at Vinecroft was.

"Except your brother," I offered cautiously.

Miss Fanny fell beautifully. "Oh, that is worry," she said, and was soon talking quite freely of the menace which her mind had never yet fully comprehended. It needed but a little direction to lead her back to that other tragic time of which I wished to question her.

"I suppose," I said, "that, being, as you say, highly strung, your brother has never been quite the same since his wife's sudden death."

Miss Fanny would hardly like to go so far as to say that. Robert was too sensible a man and too fond of the children to let an old sorrow shadow his life. But in a sense, perhaps, I was right. The shock had certainly left him more nervously sensitive. "You see, he almost went out of his head at the time," she added.

"Yes, I remember your saying, in that admirable statement of yours, that he seemed very extravagant in his grief and made some wild accusations. I don't suppose you can remember just what those accusations were?"

"Oh, but I can!" declared Miss Fanny instantly. "I have a most excellent memory. I can almost remember his very words. He insisted that Anne had killed dear Claire—accused her to her face even—but I must say Anne had sense enough to ignore it."

"Was there ever anything at all, any fact or hint upon which he could base such suspicions?"

Miss Fanny's eyes opened very widely.

"Why, whatever could there be?" she asked. "It was a driving accident, you know. The ponies took fright and ran away."

It was evident that I would have to go to Mr. Marshall himself for anything more definite, so, with a few commonplaces, I departed.

My host I found in the library. He was writing, but looked up eagerly as I entered. I would have given much to have been able to answer the question in his eyes. But instead of that I must question in my turn, bringing up intolerable memories.

"I am afraid I have no good news—as yet," I told him. "Only my own conviction—I suppose Billy has told you of that?"

"Yes." He wanted to be courteous, but there was no ring of comfort in his tone. I did not blame him. "I think it likely you are right," he went on. "Anne may very well have killed herself with the purpose of bringing death and worse than death into this fated house. And if she did, she foresaw that I, at least, would guess her purpose and her motive—otherwise her revenge would not have been complete. But she was a clever woman. She would leave no loophole through which I could prove my suspicions or even make them seem tenable to another mind."

"NO CRIMINAL ever intends to leave a loophole," I said; "but nearly all of them do. In the case of criminal insanity this is even more likely. The victim of the malady is diabolically cunning at most points, but curiously shortsighted at others."

"We have not yet found the point at upon which Anne was shortsighted," said my host dryly.

"Well," I answered, "I do not want to be unduly optimistic, but you must see that if we can prove her to have been liable to periods of insanity we will be helping your son's cause considerably. If we can prove *more* than that—" I paused sympathetically.

"What do you mean?"

"We might," I said slowly, "be able to prove criminal intention by reference to former actions."

He grew very white and his voice was a mere whisper.

"You mean—my wife?"

I nodded and waited until he had regained his poise.

"I have never dared to face my fears with regard to that," he said at last heavily; "but lately, since William has been in danger, they have come crowding back upon me. But no—it is madness."

"There was your mother, too," I said quietly.

He stared at me, and his lips moved. "And Anne's father!" I could hardly hear the words.

I started. "Her father? How was that? I had not thought of him."

Mr. Marshall sighed heavily.

"If we are right, if we are not the victims of a horrible delusion, he was the first. Consider the circumstances—a man who could not swim, an expert canoeist, an overturned canoe. But to what end is this? In no case was there any proof."

"Are you certain? Think again."

He shook his head.

"Then was it absolutely without reason that you accused Anne of planning your wife's death?"

"I had suspicions, but no proof. She had given Claire the ponies. They were apparently well broken and docile. I tried them out myself and found them so. But, as I discovered afterward, they had one bad fault. They were liable to shy and became unmanageable at the sight of anything suddenly flapping in front of them or at paper blown across the road. The dealer from whom Anne had bought them swore to me that he had told her of this fault, adding that, once this eccentricity was known, they were perfectly safe for any one with a firm hand. Anne, of course, declared that they had been sold to her under an absolute guarantee and that she knew nothing of any bad habit."

"Did no one see what startled the ponies?"

"No one on whose evidence any reliance could be placed. A little girl, who was gathering flowers in a bush near, said that she had seen the ponies coming down the road and that suddenly something white had risen up from the ditch by the roadside, making them swerve violently and break away. The white thing had frightened her, too, but when she looked again it was gone. It was generally thought that a cow, lying in the ditch, had suddenly risen right under the ponies' heads. But no cow could be found to have been straying on the road at the time."

"Where was Miss Crawford that morning?"

"She had gone out walking."

"In an opposite direction?"

"Yes."

We were silent for an appreciable time.

"I am afraid you are right," I said presently. "Whatever might have been discovered at the time, there is no hope of proving anything now. But I feel as certain as you do, in your heart, that it was no white cow that frightened the shying ponies."

He covered his face with a shaking hand.

"She was insane, you know," I added hastily.

"Is hatred insanity, then?" he asked. And in the face of this ultimate triumph of hating I felt I could only answer "Yes."

A LEAF FROM JOHN MCGREGOR'S DIARY

TO A man of my years, indecision is a vexatious thing and indecision which hangs upon a matter of conscience the most vexatious of all. Nevertheless, a sworn oath is a sworn oath. There is no way of getting away from that. Crazy or not, yon woman was a clever one! She knew well John McGregor would bide by his sworn word!

At the same time, this looks as if it might be a ticklish business for the son of Robert Marshall. It is well he has friends like the lad who came to see me today. Faith in friendship is not come by easily. Query—has the lad the Sight, or was it a fairy tale he asked me to waste my time upon? My weighed opinion is for the Sight. But I would not like Stokes to know it. He'd swear me in my dotage, and who could blame him? But I have known strange things. And this lad has a seer's eyes, cold blue with a light behind them.

I would help him if I could. But even here, on these private pages, my conscience will not allow me to speak of what I have sworn to keep secret. "Not if it were a matter of life and death?" said he. But my oath took no cognizance of life or death. And forbye there is as yet no question of any such choice. Query: Is there a way I could help without in any way encroaching upon the nature of my oath? There may be one way. It is a small way, but I will chance it. . . . If the young lad has the Sight, indeed, he may see what a duller eye would miss.

EXTRACTS FROM ANTHONY SELDON'S NOTEBOOK

THIS affair goes badly. The diary is not to be found. That there was a diary is fairly certain. Mr. Marshall remembers that it was Miss Crawford's custom to keep one when she was a girl. He remembers chaffing her about it and about the precaution she took to keep it secret; the book being fitted with a leather case which was always kept locked. He had not seen this case in her possession on either of her visits, but Roberta, the sharp-eyed, remembers having seen something which might very well have been the book. She says that one morning, having been sent upstairs with a message from Miss Fanny, she saw a green leather book, with writing in it, fall out from under her aunt's pillow. Naturally she stooped to pick it up but was told, sharply, to let it lie. She never saw it again, although, being curious, she kept her eyes open for it.

This green book has disappeared. I think it takes but little reflection to guess what became of it. No one took it away from the house, therefore it must have been sent away; and the "small parcel" which Jimmy, the chore boy, posted for Aunt Anne leaps to the mind. Jimmy is anything but bright. He remembers the parcel, but, asked if the parcel might have been a book, he remarked sagely, "It would depend on what like was the book." Personally I feel sure that the parcel was the book; that the book was the diary and that the person who received the parcel was Miss Crawford's lawyer, John McGregor.

Admitting this for purposes of argument, it would seem, from his sudden exclamation "A diary!" that he had not opened the parcel and did not know, until that moment, what the parcel contained. This, without doubt, points to his having received implicit instructions beforehand with reference to some parcel which he was to receive by post. The instructions must have been given him by Miss Crawford herself during the last interview which she had with him. Also, his stubborn refusal to speak, after he had realized what the parcel may have contained, proves that she had not neglected to swear him to secrecy regarding those instructions. This oath he will certainly not break. It looks as if we had run into a blind alley.

Later.

UNLESS something illuminating occurs, Billy will be formally arrested by Wiggan tomorrow.

Our moon-eyed friend has decided that he need not wait to discover the original source of the arsenic. He has a sublime faith that this will "come out later." In the meantime his poking and probing has unearthed (literally) a bit of fresh evidence which he finds very satisfying. He has, in fact, unearthed "Winkle," Roberta's pup. (I thought the child would scratch his eyes out when she heard of the sacrilege.) And he has discovered that Winkle died, not of colic as diagnosed by Billy, but of arsenic poisoning. "Trying it on the dog," was the way Wiggan put it. Of course it also transpires that upon observing signs of distress in Winkle, Roberta had appealed to her big brother, who had himself put the patient on a milk diet. The diet had not agreed with Winkle.

Now, in dealing with facts like these, one's basic idea is everything. Having my own idea in mind, further inquiry brought out the following facts: that Aunt Anne had more than once called Winkle "a horrid pup"; that, nevertheless, on hearing of Winkle's indisposition, she had become abruptly sympathetic, and, to Roberta's endless amazement, had visited the invalid in person. These incidents, so full of meaning to me, mean nothing at all to Detective Wiggan. He says, "Why not?"

Mr. Marshall and Billy and I held a council this afternoon. We were fairly gloomy. If Billy is arrested, Mr. Marshall will have a try at old McGregor, but, frankly, I don't believe it will do any good.

"Fact is, dad, I'm regularly up against it," said Billy.

They looked each other in the face and I could see them promise themselves to see it through as pluckily as possible. I'd have given all I possess to have been able to reassure them. But I had nothing to say. I knew that Wiggan had come to the end of his indecision.

Later.

SOMETHING has happened! It may not be worth much and yet—well, I'll set it down as coolly as possible. All along I have felt that McGregor wanted to help. But he had done nothing except to send me a sheaf of receipts (with addresses) from the various nursing homes and sanitariums which had taken care of Miss Anne Crawford during her various "indispositions." These records did not help much. They showed, first, that she had never gone to the same home twice and, second, that she had been discharged from each one as cured. Our next step would be to collect the evidence from all of them, evidence which ought certainly to be sufficient to prove that

Aunt Anne had never been "cured" at all. This evidence would be invaluable at a trial. It would confuse issues and open up speculation. But would it, of itself, prove Billy's innocence? I was afraid to face the question.

Nevertheless, in the meantime, I had set Billy to work upon a list of all available details and, when he had finished it, he brought it to me.

"There is precious little beyond names and dates and addresses," he said despondently.

I looked at the list. "Does this list include all of McGregor's material?"

"All, except this odd sheet which has nothing to do with anything and must have slipped in by mistake."

I sprang out of my chair.

"Mistake!" I yelled. "McGregor never made a mistake in his life!"

I snatched the extra sheet from Billy—but my enthusiasm received a cold douche when I saw what it was. It was merely an old, receipted bill for a piece of memorial sculpture shipped to Miss Anne Crawford, in care of John McGregor, by one Anthony Morelli.

Billy was looking over my shoulder. "That will be the monument Aunt Anne erected to the memory of her fiancé," he informed me. "I remember dad saying it must have cost some cool thousands. It was imported. She chose it somewhere in Italy—"

"Italy!"

The word seemed to ring a tiny bell in my brain. I looked at the bill again. Anthony Morelli—yes, Italian, certainly. Instantly, as if waiting only for this stimulus, a memory flashed before me—a narrow street, hot with sun, a glimpse of sea, a man in a powdered smock—Anthony Morelli! I remembered that, in the dream, I had known his name!

"What's the matter?" asked Billy sharply. "You look as if something had hit you."

"An idea has hit me," I said. "Billy, old scout, I don't want to raise false hopes but—yes, an idea has certainly hit me."

Evening.

I HAVE been thinking it out. And the longer I think the more certain I am that the dream contained a clue of sorts. I felt this at the time but could not fit it in. The enigmatic words, for instance: "It was made here. Within the hand of sorrow is the key." What was "it," and where was "here"? The remembrance of the dream picture, as I held Morelli's bill in my hands, and my sudden recognition of his name as the name of the man in the dream, seemed to answer both these questions. "It" could only be the memorial erected by Aunt Anne to her dead lover, and "here" was plainly the Italian town where the monument had been made. In that case the facts that there was such a monument and that it had been made in a foreign country were, in some way, important clues. The rest of the cryptic words, "Within the hand of sorrow is the key," seemed to have no meaning by itself, but referred, presumably, to Aunt Anne's mad sorrow for the dead and expressed what I had always believed, that in this grief lay the key to the whole tragic sequence.

To return to the clue of the monument—McGregor evidently knew or suspected its importance. Otherwise, why had he enclosed this particular bill? (To think that it had come by chance, would be to stretch coincidence too far.) Had he hoped that I would guess its importance, too? It seemed probable. But to ask for further light and leading would, I felt sure, be useless. The canny Scot had done his utmost. If anything were to be done I must do it. I decided to interview Detective Wiggan.

Wiggan, I am sure, thinks me crazy. But he is willing to humor me to a certain extent. He has human moments. He has quite determined to arrest Billy, but he is willing to give him a bit more rope, feeling that he will thereby hang himself more thoroughly.

"When a thing is so, it's so," said Detective Wiggan, "and every new fact that is a fact, is bound to prove it."

"You couldn't have stated my own belief better," I told him, with emphasis on the words "*if it is a fact.* Now, some of your facts simply aren't! But we won't argue. Do I gather that you are willing to allow Billy, accompanied by yourself, to make one of a party to visit the Mark Summers memorial, in the hope that we may find a few facts waiting for us there?"

Wiggan observed me with a certain pity.

"It is only fair to say that this is quite the farthest I can go. Afterward—"

"Afterward you must do as you think wise. If nothing comes of this, I am done—for the present. Mr. Marshall and his son thoroughly understand."

"And who else will be of the party?" asked Wiggan resignedly.

"Me!" shrilled the voice of Miss Roberta behind him. I am afraid she had been listening.

"Certainly not," I told her promptly. But the sergeant, for some obscure reason, murmured his unanswerable "Why not?" And I remembered that, as it was Roberta who had seen the "green book with writing in it," she might be useful after all. For that the book in McGregor's mysterious parcel and the clue of the memorial sculpture had something in common, I felt sure.

"The others," I said, "will be Mr. John McGregor and Mr. Marshall, making six in all."

A CEMETERY is not a cheery place. When one of a party stands in danger of a capital sentence it is even less cheerful than usual. Yet the cemetery where Mark Summers lay buried was a peaceful spot and even beautiful. Mr. McGregor, tight-lipped, escorted the party. He had been there before.

It struck me, in fact, that he had been there very recently. There was one remark of his, for instance, to the effect that "even a week makes a great change in the foliage at this time of year," which appeared, from the direction of his gaze, to have special reference to a Virginia creeper at the cemetery gate. This indication, small as it was, gave me a thrill of hope.

We walked on, talking commonplaces, until our guide said, pointing with his cane, "There it is—the white stone on the left. It is a verra fine piece of sculpture," he added judicially, and, with that, set his lips with the resolution of one who has had his say and on no account will say more.

We ranged ourselves in front of the monument. Detective Wiggan observed that he, himself, was not a judge of sculpture. Mr. Marshall murmured something about this particular piece being quite "out of the common," and Roberta sagely observed, "I suppose that's why aunt went to Italy for it." She looked at Mr. McGregor as she said it but that figure of repression did not flicker an eyelash.

I turned from him to the stone itself. It was indeed an uncommon thing, beautiful, distinctive. Delicate, fluted columns supported a graceful dome, under whose light shadow stood a sculptured form. Morelli, it seemed, must have been a notable artist, for the figure almost lived. It was a life-size statue of a draped woman, standing. Her shrouded head was bowed, the eyes covered by one raised arm. The other arm hung supine by her side, the beautiful, curved fingers partly closed. There was in the whole posture a wonderful suggestion of the abandon of grief. All this was apparent on the instant, and an instant was all that I devoted to its contemplation.

"Gentlemen," I said, "you all know, more or less, why we are here. It is because I believe that before she died, Miss Anne Crawford concealed, or caused to be concealed, certain papers which may hold the true explanation of her death. This is the grave of the man she idolized and to whom, if my theory is correct, she dedicated a unique vengeance. The idea of concealing the record of that vengeance here is wild and bizarre, but, to a mind disordered as we know hers was, the wild and bizarre becomes the natural. I will welcome your help in examining this monument."

"Right!" said Wiggan cheerfully. His manner implied, "And then I hope we'll have no more nonsense." He set to work at once. Mr. Marshall and Billy looked on helplessly enough. McGregor, to whom I directed a last despairing glance, was careful to be looking elsewhere. He even withdrew a few steps, taking Roberta with him.

"We must not be in the way, young lady," was the only observation he made.

Then I, too, began my search. Wiggan, I saw at once, was the better searcher. He was an old hand. Together we went over the memorial from the top of its curving dome to its base in the close-clipped grass. We prodded and sounded and measured. We tested the slender columns, explored each tiniest crevice. No slightest sign of any hiding-place rewarded our efforts. Wiggan, I think, made sure of this long before I did. But I liked him for the fact that he did not hasten to proclaim failure.

I HAD reached the base of the great stone and my hope was almost dead. Under my lowered lids I glanced once more at my enigmatic Scot. He was looking at Roberta and Roberta, who has a distinct artistic bent, was absorbed in the beauty of the statue.

"Look how her shoulders sag!" she was saying in an awed voice. "I didn't know that stone *could* sag. Who is she supposed to be, Mr. McGregor?"

"What her heathen name may be, if any, I do not know," said McGregor, in his legal voice; "but in English you might call her 'Sorrow.' "

Sorrow!

The grass on which I knelt seemed to sway under me. Once again I saw a hot, bright street, a man in a dusty smock and heard the words, "Within the hand of sorrow is the key."

What a blind bat I had been!

Very cool now, I raised myself and dusted the grass from my trousers knees. I looked up. The down-flung hand of Sorrow was just within my reach. My own hand slipped into its gently curving fingers. Was there something there—a slight roughness, a tiny crevice? No, nothing. Yet, with the confidence of revelation upon me, I pressed and pressed again that smooth, cold palm.

Slowly and almost without sound, the figure moved, turned gently upon its base, and stopped. But where its feet had stood was now a shallow cavity. The sun shone brightly upon its contents—an ordinary postal packet, stamped, sealed and addressed. The address was that of John McGregor, Barrister and Solicitor.

There was a pregnant pause. Then Wiggan spoke.

"Unless you can assure us that this packet contains nothing which may in any way concern your client's death, Mr. McGregor, we shall be compelled in common justice to break this seal."

Mr. McGregor took snuff.

"I have nothing to say," he remarked stolidly.

Wiggan lifted out the packet. I cut the string and removed the wrapper.

"The green book! The green book with the writing!" cried Roberta, dancing with excitement.

I handed the precious thing to Wiggan—and I hope my voice was steady. "I think this finishes your case, sergeant."

His round eyes, more moonlike than ever, passed mournfully over our excited faces and slowly fell to the betraying volume in his hand. He sighed.

"With a woman, you never know. . . . I've found out," said Detective Wiggan.

WHAT follows is by way of anticlimax, I suppose. With the finding of the diary in the monument, the Crawford case was practically closed. Duly identified by Roberta, certified by experts to be in the handwriting of the deceased, and fully proved, on the admission of John McGregor, to have been placed in its strangely prepared hiding-place by the direct instructions of Miss Crawford herself, the diary, as a piece of direct evidence, met the most exigent demands. The cloud over Vinecroft passed on as swiftly as it had gathered.

As for the record itself—to a student of pathology or a lover of the morbid, the contents of that green book would greatly appeal, but for those who prefer sunlight and sanity its revelations had better remain unread. Sufficient to say that there was enough, and more than enough, to prove to the utmost, the patiently matured scheme by which, knowing that she must shortly die in any case, Anne Crawford had plotted to make her death her crowning vengeance upon the man she hated. There was evidence, too, though mostly by allusion (since earlier diaries had been destroyed) to suggest that our worst suspicions as to those other deaths were only too accurate. But, to complete this present record, it is necessary to give only one entry—the last.

LAST ENTRY IN THE DIARY OF MISS ANNE CRAWFORD

September 15.

ALL goes well—excellently well! We quarreled last night. The boy has never been taught self-control. He was easily goaded, and let his temper flare. I heard the step of that white cat, Fanny, in the hall. Her evidence will help to hang him—a satisfying touch.

Have I neglected anything? I have thought of it so long—oh, so long! I have been very careful. I have been cool, unmoved. I have not dared to think how near I am to triumph. It might show so plainly in my face that even these fools might see it. . . .

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1924

I can think of nothing more. . . . The poison is where it will be found. . . . I dared not put it in a simpler place. . . . Better if he had purchased it himself, but the risk of a suggestion was too great. As it is they can never trace it. It was bought long ago, abroad. It has not degenerated, though—the pup died quickly.

Is there a weak link anywhere? His pride will make him bring the milk as usual. . . . He will prepare it himself. . . . The maid is out. . . . Yes, I have thought of everything.

The black feeling at the base of my brain is spreading. I know what that means . . . but I can hold it back now until the end. . . . Oh, how I long to scream in their sheeps' faces! to laugh and laugh again, to dangle my vengeance before their silly eyes, to see *his* heart break as Mark's was broken—

I must not!—only a little longer. . . . This book goes tomorrow and McGregor is sworn. . . .

Mark, beloved, is it enough? I lay my triumph at your feet.

Coming in September

Besides the new serial "Crusts," by S. Carleton, and the three complete novelettes "It Can't Be Done," "The Spartan Breed," and "A Runner-up for Providence," announced on page 59, there will be—

Six Short Stories

Vamos By Arthur Mills

Volstock, a world-tramp in Argentina, takes long chances and guards a secret

Ex-Has-Been By Sam Carson

An old-timer of the track at Churchill Downs stages a dramatic come-back

Noise By William Hazlett Upson

Modern salesmanship with a delightfully humorous flavor

Mama Peretieux By Oscar Schisgall

Mama Peretieux of the Apaches changes her motto that "it is easy to be good; only the brave are bad"

And David Took Thence a Stone By Norman Reilly Raine

Surprising things take place when the shrewdness of youth combats a bull-headed Goliath of Commerce

Postponement By J. C. Snaith

Wherein three people prove their mettle. A story that tugs at the heart

Together with Honoré Willsie Morrow's "The Devonshers," the story of a Wyoming girl's fight against odds and the startling community secrets that it discloses, and "The Finger of Fire," by George Kibbe Turner, a mystery of the seashore

September *EVERYBODY'S*—Out August 15

The Getaway Horse

A Story in Which You Get Another Fascinating Snap-shot of Racetrack Men—and a Woman

By Sam Carson

"BRING that colt up, Pitcher. Move!"

Starter Drake was a patient man; but he was exasperated at the sullen obedience of Pitcher Justin. Twelve nervous two-year-olds were at the barrier in the third race, that June day at Latonia. And it was oppressively hot.

The little jockey, whose ears stood out like those of the little pitchers in the proverb, jabbed his mount viciously. The high-strung colt shot ahead and through the barrier. Drake's face turned purple.

"Ten days, Pitcher. Saw you use your heels. We'll see if the ground can't cool them off. Are you ready?"

Click! The webbing levers shot upward and twelve two-year-olds thundered off, their goal the judges' stand, three-quarters of a mile away.

It was a hard-fought race, with the field close-bunched until the horses reached the head of the stretch. Then Pitcher Justin went to work. He was boiling with suppressed wrath. For one thing, Knowlton, his mount, was a sulky animal, with a sly disposition to nip at jockeys' legs. And the colt had done that very thing; only it had escaped Drake's watchful eyes.

"Gangway!" Pitcher shouted. "I'm coming through. Pitcher needs the money."

And go through Pitcher did. He shoved Knowlton ahead in a whirlwind finish, with his whip playing a tattoo on the colt's flanks.

But upon dismounting, to go before the judges and hear Drake's sentence affirmed, the jockey lost his defiant air. Scattered applause from the stands, recognition of his victory, seemed a mockery now. Some one touched his elbow—Mack Stevens, the premier rider of Kentucky.

"Tough luck, Pitcher," he growled. "Why don't you tell 'em the colt bit your ankle. I saw him."

Pitcher's peaked face clouded. "What's the use? Drake don't like me. Never did. Every one of the stewards figures out I'm a rough rider. They're gonna put me on the ground."

"Sure is tough," Stevens commented, "and just two more weeks of the meeting. Well—get broke—call on me."

Pitcher Justin was right. The stewards set him down ten days and suspended a fifty-dollar fine. And to add insult to injury, Tobey Green, Knowlton's owner, assured Pitcher, rather noisily, that he couldn't ride for him any longer.

The jockey walked away, with a red face. But Green's voice rose, attracting the interest of hangers-on along the rail. Then Pitcher turned, walked up to the owner.

"Listen here, you owl-faced skinflint," the rider announced. "You keep that line of chatter up and I'll tell these yaps along the fence how you framed the public on old Martha Lee last week. I'm tired of your bunk. Get me!"

Green did. He imitated an alarmed clam, whirled and departed swiftly from the track when an onlooker suggested that he talk about Martha Lee.

Now Tobey Green wasn't exactly crooked; he was mediocre; just one of several shoestring owners who have from two to five horses, none very good. Winning a race meant all the world to Tobey. But remaining in the good graces of the powers that be meant much more. That accounted for his virtuous indignation. But Martha Lee was a vulnerable spot. Tobey had nursed the old mare along until ready. And then he had found a soft spot a few days before. Martha Lee, under a million-dollar ride by Mack Stevens, had passed the finish posts first. And she had paid ten to one through the paris mutuels. Pitcher's rôle had been significant; under orders from Tobey Green he had permitted the veteran mare to drop back to fifth position three afternoons before her winning effort.

Otto Shultz, who sold hot dogs from his stand above the betting shed, dispensed sandwiches to Tobey Green; and he received twenty cents and a highly colored version of Pitcher Justin's suspension. The kindly old German with a Bismarckian mustache listened sympathetically.

"So," he muttered. "It iss too bad. Maybe," he suggested, "Pitcher will do better next time."

FOR various and pertinent reasons, Otto should have joined fervently in Green's conclusions. Badgered by every dirty-faced child of the stables, Otto was the easiest mark who ever did business at Latonia track. His credit was abused; and he was the butt of cruel jokes. Little Pitcher Justin was among the worst of Otto's tormentors, too. And there were times when the jockey could behave like the blackest imp on earth.

Yet Otto slid under a shelf of his stand, shed his apron and limped toward jockey quarters. He met Pitcher just outside the door.

"I hear somedings," Otto began, "about setting down already. For what haf you done?"

"Tobey's big bum of a Knowlton bit me. I lammed him one with my heel and Drake saw me," Pitcher growled. "That's all."

"Py Golly, dot's a shame!" Otto protested.

"Aw, I'll be all right," Pitcher growled. "Go back to your stale dogs, Otto. Somebody'll see you talking with me and have you chased off."

"Himmel!" Otto was very credulous. "You just let them. I stick with mine friendts."

Now this was heaping coals of fire indeed. Pitcher gulped. He wanted to say something very careless, or irrelevant. Then:

"Say, Otto, how's the boy coming on? Ain't seen him for a long time."

The hot-dog vendor expanded. William—once Wilhelm—was Otto's only son.

Otto dug into his trousers pocket with a pudgy hand, brought forth a tiny plush case. He opened it and displayed a fair-sized solitaire ring.

"Sara iss twenty-two Saturday," Otto explained. "I haf saved months for dot ring. My daughter-in-law iss a good girl. Villum iss lucky."

Pitcher Justin knew little about diamonds. But the unusual design on either side of the setting intrigued him. "Say, Otto, them ain't hot dogs. What in thunder is it?"

"Son," Otto pointed out rather proudly, "the word 'von' goes before our name. Dot iss an edelweiss between crossed swords. My family has the right to wear dot cr-rest."

"Von Shultz," Pitcher repeated. "Hot dog!" Then, at the hurt look in the vendor's eyes, Pitcher changed the subject. "You're all right, Otto. Maybe my family had the right to sport a shield and wear boiler plate. The old man used to spout some of that bunk before he drunk too much of the wrong stuff. Well, s'long. Gotta kill some time the next ten days."

In all likelihood Pitcher Justin would have forgotten Otto, his ring and his beloved William summarily if the little rider hadn't gone out to Sweeney's roadhouse that night. Sweeney's place was rather conveniently located back in the Kentucky hills not so far from Covington. It was a prime favorite with racetrack habitués. Mike Sweeney was a very astute person. He observed prohibition laws strictly. In fact he had signs announcing that fact, posted all about the main room and little, screened stalls. So far, so good. But Sweeney's waiters were not so law-abiding. For a certain consideration any one of the twelve employees would shed flasks from hip pocket, shoulder holster or inner coat recess. True, they paid Sweeney for the privilege of attending patrons. But that was an irrelevant fact; Sweeney obeyed the law. When one of his men was arrested, he was discharged forthwith. It was a good, workable system.

Pitcher arrived at nine o'clock that evening, and a slim, dark-haired girl with much too red lips shrilled out a welcome. "Come on over, Pitcher," she urged. "What's the good thing tomorrow? Got cleaned out today."

" 'Lo, Helen," he replied. "I'm in bad luck tonight. Got set down for ten days. Gotta see some other bozo for tips this week."

"Joe," she called to a waiter. "Shake a leg. Yeah—two of 'em."

She watched the waiter fill a pair of glasses with satisfaction, then handed him a bill. Pitcher saw the denomination and whistled.

"Say!" he demanded. "Who's your angel?"

"Nice little married man," she laughed airily. "Know how I got that money? The poor sap was orey-eyed. Offered to bet fifty dollars I couldn't stand on one foot a quarter of an hour."

"Did you?"

The girl opened her purse. "One hundred and twenty dollars I made off him before he left. Kid, he's the easiest mark I ever found in the middle of the road."

There was skepticism in Pitcher's face. A touch of dull red also.

"Don't give me the high and mighty," she flared. "And me telling you the honest truth. I wouldn't let that sap even kiss me. He's too easy. Come on, let's drink this up and go to town. There's a dancing contest on at Elm Garden. Friend of mine's entered."

Pitcher agreed sulkily. "Who's the guy you've been talking about?" he demanded.

She arose, reached for her wrap. "His name is William—William—Snider. No. Wait. No—it's Shultz."

PITCHER JUSTIN'S widespread ears had flagged a large amount of worldly wisdom. It was difficult to stir up jealousy regarding the girl called Helen, whose last name didn't count. For one thing, Helen was older than Pitcher. If one could have learned her full story, she couldn't have been blamed so much for living in that interesting borderland that separates the respectable from the underworld. Helen was a freebooter in a world where wolves and jackals preyed. And while she moved far too near the mouth of a treacherous pit, she had not fallen—yet. Foolish married men, fascinated by a near plunge, were her specialty. Usually she traveled so far with them, obtained what treasure she might, then left them flat. But it was a precarious existence. Pitcher she liked because he offered her company and was an unregenerate soul.

All the same it was a rather unpleasant evening. Pitcher and Helen quarreled in a way. He had never liked Otto's precious son. And the jockey was filled with a virtuous indignation. At the door of her room, Helen turned.

"I hope you enjoyed yourself," she said tartly. "You've been talking like a preacher all night."

And that was that. Several mornings later Pitcher met Mack Stevens. The jockey was elated over the signing of a new contract for the coming year.

"Broke yet?" he asked Pitcher.

"Naw. Still in the ring. Guess I can last it until I get back in silks."

"Just thinking," Mack reflected. "Saw the Warder bunch drifting in last night. Sure is a killing under way when them wolves show up. Figured you might hook up with 'em on a getaway race, if you was desperate."

"I'd have to be desperate," Pitcher commented, "to string with those yeggs. Reckon they'll be hanging out at Sweeney's from now on."

There were three in the Warder clique: Snoots Warder, cadaverous and laconic; Bill Hitson, pompous, corpulent and pink-faced; and little Eddie Martin with the countenance of a choir boy. Of the trio, Martin was the most popular—and the most dangerous. They owned no horses. Moreover, they were never seen in the vicinity of a racetrack until near the end of the meeting. Then, like vultures, they swooped down for a brief stay. There would be a getaway race; and the three would vanish, pockets stuffed.

The getaway race is an unpleasant institution—for the public. Despite the vigilance of officials, there is at least one race wherein one horse, a well-played favorite, finishes out of the money, the race being won by a comfortably long shot. Usually touts, improvident stable employees and hangers-on in general profit thereby, and are enabled to travel on to the next meeting. But the promoters make the big clean-up. The real getaway race is put over without the knowledge of owners; that procedure lengthens the odds.

Choosing getaway horses was a specialty of Snoots Warder. Details of the frame-up he delegated to his lieutenants, such as arranging with riders willing to take part in the shooing in. Warder took no chances with the better-class jockeys. Accordingly, a claiming race was his medium. As a rule, mediocre horses—and riders—performed in the smaller purses. Hence his work was rendered easier.

Pitcher Justin saw the trio that night. Eddie Martin, with his ever ready grin, was the center of a noisy group. Hitson was discoursing to a smaller knot, while Warder sat alone at a table. Some one started the electric piano and Martin, with a whoop, seized a girl near by, and began to dance. Pitcher saw that it was Helen. Sulkily he chose a table in a remote corner. He was there when Otto Shultz's son entered.

"Oh-h-h, Willie!" the girl squealed, breaking away from her partner. "You're just in time. Here's Eddie Martin. He's asked about you twice tonight."

Justin watched them shake hands, Otto's son was flushed and too flashily dressed. He was beginning to develop a paunch. William's face, while not unhandsome, was weak and puffy. He swaggered as he walked to a farther corner and summoned a waiter.

"What Villum needs," Pitcher growled, "is a jolt in the stomach and a left to his chin."

Helen spied the rider and approached. She bore no outward resentment, behaving as if she had forgotten their last meeting. Plumping into a chair, she set about putting the youth in a better humor. And she succeeded, so that Pitcher forgot his grouch. But he didn't forget William Shultz. He couldn't, for Otto's son was informing the world what a good sport he was.

"What's Eddie stringing with that eggplant for?" Pitcher wanted to know. "Going in the oil-stock business?"

"YOU'RE the most suspicious man I ever heard of," Helen replied. "Eddie promised me the price of a new hat if I'd introduce him to Willie night before last. How'd I know what he wants? And what do I care?"

"Fair enough," Pitcher admitted, watching Snoots Warder get up and join the pair. "This Shultz bird must be rolling in jack. Looks like he'd pull Otto off that hot-dog stand out at the track."

"Willie said his dad won't give it up," Helen said. "Maybe his old man's stuck on the business. You couldn't blame Willie for that. The kid's a sure enough sport, believe me."

"Huh!" Pitcher changed the subject.

A few minutes afterward, Warder, Eddie Martin and Bill Hitson departed, taking with them young Shultz. That action preceded Sweeney's sudden appearance with the announcement that he was about to lock up. A tip had just come in that a flying squadron of federal and state officers was on the raid.

Pitcher, Helen and a weird assortment of touts and well-dressed men, joined in the rush for machines. The jockey prevailed upon a very much excited young man to take him and the girl into town. And it was very probably this act of solicitude on Pitcher's part that made Helen remain quite thoughtful until she reached the rooming-house she called home.

"Kid," she said impulsively, "I'm a fool, just an ordinary dumbbell."

"What's wrong now?" Pitcher asked.

"Oh—this business of getting by." She looked tired and a bit pale. "I'm sick of it. Know what I'm going to do?"

Pitcher didn't.

"I'm going to make a big clean-up somewhere and settle down. Hunt me up a job. That—raid scared me up. Suppose I was to be arrested. I'd be a goner; a girl with a police record." She began to cry.

For the first time in his life Pitcher yielded to sentiment. He couldn't quite understand Helen's standards, or her code. But he did believe in her. Oddly enough, he wondered why he felt so cool, so unthrilled even as a desire to protect this girl swept over him. And as he spoke he realized that friendship—rather, comradeship—inspired him.

"What could I do, girlie? Hook up with you?"

Helen ceased crying. And whatever Pitcher might have done, remained undone. She was giggling. Pitcher felt as if he had been doused with ice water.

"I c-can't help it," she gasped. "I'm not laughing—at you. But m-marrying! I couldn't—marry anybody—else."

Pitcher looked down at the cap he was twisting in his hands. "Aw—forget it!" he growled. "You got some sense."

She looked at him. And he saw something desperate in her eyes. "I'm too near the jumping-off place," she said. "Pitcher, I'd die before I'd change my mind. And I'm homesick—and tired. You'd better go. I'm bum company tonight. I don't know what's coming over me. Maybe it's just imagination. But—I can't stand to think of being arrested."

Pitcher trudged to his room in a slow rain. Intermittent flashes of lightning paled the light from street lamps. Helen puzzled the rider. It was evident that the impending raid had given her the fright of her life. If Pitcher had been more experienced, he could have obtained a revelation of the girl's past. Certainly a crisis was approaching; and she was afraid.

The matter was still in Pitcher's consciousness the next afternoon when he paused to talked with Otto Shultz.

"Say," Pitcher demanded, "what's eating on you, anyway?"

Otto shook his head disconsolately. "Sara's ring. Somebody haf stolen it."

Pitcher whistled. "Told the police about it?"

The vender looked up, surprised. "Why should I? Villum, he haf promised to find it. Aindt he better than the police?"

"Maybe." Pitcher's eyes narrowed speculatively. "Somebody swipe it from the house?"

"Yass. See—there's my Sara now. With the leetle poy."

Pitcher saw a tiny, sweet-faced woman leading a protesting child toward the clubhouse. Somehow, she was exactly as he imagined she would be. "She haf never seen a race," Otto explained. "So. I get her a pass."

"I tell you," Pitcher suggested. "Give your boy three days' grace. Then I'd call in the cops. That ring set you back a couple of hundred dollars, didn't it?"

"Two hundert and fifty," Otto corrected.

"Had to sell a bunch of hot dogs, huh? Well, believe me, I'd certainly go after that ring."

Now Pitcher wasn't exactly suspicious about the disappearance of Otto's gift just then. And, an hour later, he didn't have to be. It came about that the jockey received an extra hard jolt.

HELEN was on one of her infrequent trips to the track. Twice she hailed the rider from the stands, at last gaining his eye. He went up the stairway and discussed the coming race. It was when she handed over her program to be marked that he saw a diamond solitaire flashing from her left hand.

"For the love of Mike!" he exclaimed. "Where'd you get that sparkler? At the ten-cent store?"

"Silly! That's real. Remember what I told you last night? Well, Eddie Martin didn't make good with the price of a hat. So he sent this over at noon. I must have done him a big favor."

"You must have," Pitcher admitted. "A whopping big one—"

He broke off suddenly. For his eyes, straying back to the ring, caught the peculiar design—an edelweiss and crossed swords.

"You say Eddie Martin sent that over?" Pitcher asked in a strange voice.

"Sure. Who else would have?"

"Who brought it to you?"

"A messenger. Why?"

"No note?"

"Say! Why the cross examination? No. There wasn't any note. The boy said it was from Mr. Martin. And that was all. Now what else, Mr. Smarty?"

Pitcher arose. "I guess there's nothing else," he said dully, "—nothing for a while. Going out to Sweeney's soon?"

"Thought I'd drop out tonight, just to thank Eddie, if nothing else. But I'm coming right back."

"Wait for me—at nine," Pitcher told her. "I'll bring you back in a taxi."

There was no altruism in Pitcher Justin's scheme. In fact, it was unformed when he talked to Helen, except that happy inspiration of the taxicab. But the girl was wearing the ring Otto Shultz had given his daughter-in-law. Of that Pitcher was certain. Therefore, he was determined to go to the bottom of things. That, beyond a doubt, meant trouble. So Pitcher made preparations. He visited a pawnbroker, then drifted about the streets until he located a driver known to court adventure—for a price.

Sweeney's roadhouse was functioning normally; there was the usual run of visitors, youths and elderly men who hastened to the relative privacy of screened stalls. Faces long familiar to Pitcher were to be seen in the fairly crowded room. The jockey paused in the entrance to growl a warning at the taxi driver: "Better keep the engine running, bo. May be leaving in a hurry."

Hands in coat pockets, Pitcher entered quietly, walking directly to a half-dozen gathered about Helen and two other girls. Eddie Martin was demonstrating a trick with cards, Bill Hitson lounging near. From the tail of his eye, Pitcher saw Snoots Warder, alone as usual, sitting at a table.

There was a break in the conversation. Pitcher realized instinctively that Helen had warned Eddie. Her expression was rather complacent, except that her eyes revealed a glint of defiance.

" 'Lo, Pitcher," Eddie sang out. "Hear you're back in the saddle tomorrow."

The jockey nodded. "Suspension's lifted. But I'm not riding until Saturday. Got a leg up in the fourth."

"Nothing tomorrow, then?"

"Nothing," Pitcher affirmed.

Eddie sighed. "Too bad. You don't know what you're missing."

"I can guess," Pitcher retorted. "But I come on other business." He turned to Helen. "Well?"

The girl raised her hand, regarded the diamond ring speculatively. "I've got nothing to say, Pitcher. Nothing."

Pitcher turned to Eddie, eyes narrowed. Martin had laid his cards on the table, left hand fumbling with the ace of diamonds. "Helen said you was butting in about that ring," Eddie said gently. "Guess it's up to me to set you right. I sent it to her. See!"

"The ring's hot," Pitcher replied evenly. "Otto Shultz bought it for his daughter-in-law; saved up six months to buy it. How'd you get hold of it?"

Pitcher saw Snoots Warder rise, edge sidewise toward Eddie. Bill Hitson backed away. There was fear in his eyes. All over the room voices fell. Sweeney, at the farther end of the room, was glancing at the switches controlling the lights.

Eddie Martin's eyes took all of this in as well. But he was more interested in the bulge in Pitcher's coat pocket, formed by his right hand; that hand was holding something; and it was pointing directly toward Eddie Martin.

"How'd you get hold of it?" Pitcher repeated, voice softer, if anything.

EDDIE MARTIN knew he could reach his own coat pocket within a split second; likewise that Snoots Warder was a formidable ally. But Eddie's life had taught him other things. He desired to die of old age, nothing else. For a youth, he was exceedingly discreet. Suddenly he spread both hands outward, smiled.

"How'd I know the ring was hot, Pitcher? Willie Shultz soaked it with me for a hundred and twenty-five bucks. Then he sold it. And I passed it on to Helen."

Pitcher considered this information. "I'm not wearing a chip on my shoulder," he announced. "But the minute Otto sets the dicks after that ring, hell's popping. Helen's showed it to a darned sight too many folks." He turned to the girl. "You said you was scared of an arrest. Well, give me that ring."

The girl whimpered, looked at Eddie as if for guidance. But he ignored her. Pitcher held out his left hand, face grim. At last Helen slipped off the ring and gave it over. Pitcher thrust it into his pocket. "Come on," he ordered. "Any of you birds seen little Willie?"

No one answered for a moment. Then Eddie spoke up. "You might find him at jail—or over at Otto's. Willie pulled an awful boner day before yesterday."

"I figured that," Pitcher cut in dryly.

"Yep," Eddie continued. "I gave him Runabout to place—a sure thing. And the sap shot five hundred on his nose. Runabout placed. Too bad," he added, "—especially when Willie borrowed that money—from his company."

This phase of Willie's misfortunes did not affect Pitcher. Neither did Eddie Martin's part in it. The jockey had set about to straighten out Helen's part. He realized that, indirectly, he was doing Otto a favor. On the way back to Covington, Pitcher was considering the best manner to return the ring. Finding Willie seemed about the best solution. So he told Helen so.

"Anyway," she sobbed. "I'm jinxed. And I wanted the money."

"Naturally," Pitcher commented grimly. "Lots of people got that craving."

"B-but everybody ain't in my fix," she wailed. "I wanta go home."

"Home!" Pitcher was amazed. "What the— Say, girl! Give me the inside track or nothing. What's it all about?"

"I was going to clean up," she explained in jerks. "With that ring I was going to raise all the money I could and put it on Jo Boggs' nose in the sixth race tomorrow. He's the getaway horse."

"That Warder's frame-up?"

"Yes."

"Then what?"

"I was going back home. Back in the country town I've been hating so. I—got a letter last week, Pitcher. They're—Mamma's not well. And—maybe Bill will take me back."

"Who's Bill?" Pitcher demanded huskily. "Your—husband?"

She nodded. "He runs a feed store. We quarreled—three years ago—about me having to get up at five o'clock and cook his breakfast. I—ran away."

Pitcher gazed straight ahead. Helen laid her hand over his, held it tight. "There were—other things. I'm not much good, Pitcher. Read too many bum stories—and saw too many movies. It looked easy to make your own way—until I tried it. I've been a coward all along. Guess I floated along with the current because it was easier. I was tired enough of it when that letter reached me. It had been forwarded a dozen times. And Pitcher, I wanta go home."

She buried her face; and Pitcher did not see the street lights, so concentrated was he upon this problem. Presently the driver slowed up, slid the partition aside. "What's your stop, bo?"

Pitcher gave him Helen's address.

"Kid," he told her, "if you do go back home, you're a thoroughbred—and a stake one at that. Keep mum about Warder's horse tomorrow. But don't buy a ticket on Jo Boggs. Get that? Lay off the ponies. I'll do your ticket-buying. I'll tell you," he added. "Beat it around to Otto's stand about time for the fifth race tomorrow and ask him for my horse in the sixth. He'll tell you. Then go up in the stands and root for me. Get me? Root! For I'm gonna ride your one-way ticket home. S'long."

Pitcher had lots of action before him. He gave up his search for Willie Shultz shortly before midnight. Then he ordered the driver to take him to the tiny village beyond Latonia track.

Tobey Green grumbled at the nerve of any one waking him at that hour. And he was in a far worse humor when he opened the door on Pitcher Justin. But the jockey gave him no time to air his disgust. "Tobey, you got Knowlton in the sixth race tomorrow, ain't you?"

"Yes, I have. But what in all get-out—"

"Can't he beat Jo Boggs—on a fast track at a mile?"

"Say!" Tobey was forgetting his grouch. "My colt can run circles about that plater. Whoever said he could run?"

"Warder's gang," Pitcher explained softly. "That's their getaway horse tomorrow. I just got it—straight. What you going to do about it?"

TOBEY'S eyes bulged. "For the love of Pete! That's why Enchanto is in that race then—to be the favorite. Come in, Pitcher. Say—they aim to clean up right, don't they?"

"They do," Pitcher admitted. "But what about you, Tobey? Why not knock them for a row of furlongs? Who's on Knowlton? Johnny Driggs?"

Tobey said Johnny would ride. Pitcher replaced his cap. "Well, in that case, no use talking. Better go and buy yourself a ticket on Jo Boggs and let Snoots Warder walk off with the dough."

"Driggs can put Knowlton out in front," Tobey protested.

"He can," Pitcher admitted. "But he won't. Say, Tobey! Give me the leg up on your colt. I'm eligible now. Give me the colt and we'll shipwreck this bunch of yeggs. And you'll collect the purse as well as ten to one on your money through the iron men."

"You'd keep out of trouble—not get in a jam with Drake?" Tobey inquired.

"Aw—for the love of Mike! Yes. Tobey, you ain't got the ghost of a chance unless I get the ride. They've got that race sewed up. Shame, too. Ain't gonna make much of a hit with the public. We show 'em up and it'll be the last of Snoots Warder in Kentucky. I got a hunch."

Tobey was convinced. "Better wait until you fellows are in quarters for the day, hadn't I?"

Pitcher assented. "Switch riders as late as you can. Then go down and set in the works. I just gotta beat that gang tomorrow."

The jockey dismissed his driver and trudged home. "Some of these days," he reflected, "I'm gonna have enough jack to own my own speed wagon. And some of these days, Pitcher Justin, you'll get burnt out in helping the poor downtrodden. If Eddie Martin wasn't so—so cocksure! Oh, well, I'll tag his goat, the Lord and Tobey's colt helping.

"Helen's better off, heading for home," he muttered. "Her part's easy to settle. But Willie Shultz! That ham! I'd like to paste him one."

Pitcher awoke rather late the next day. Consequently he did not reach the track until shortly before noon. Early comers were already filing through the gates and lunch stands were busy. The rider went by the track secretary's office, received assurance that he had no obstacles in the way of accepting mounts, then moved on to Otto's hot-dog stand.

The vender was serving patrons absently. His mustache, ordinarily so stiff and erect, drooped. And there was a pathetic stoop to his shoulders as he limped to and fro. Pitcher slipped in at the rear and waited until the customers dwindled temporarily.

"Where's Willie?" he demanded suddenly.

At the startled look in the father's eyes, Pitcher realized that Otto knew the worst.

Otto reached for a butcher knife. "You go avay," he threatened. My Villum iss all right. You—all of you bums. You keep avay from me."

Pitcher held his ground. "You're on the wrong entry, Otto. I'm riding for you. I—I found your ring."

Otto's face went white. He approached Pitcher, his hands trembling. "Himmel! Pitcher—you—found—dot ring?"

"Yeah. Easy. Guy picked it up for four bucks. Reckon some bird swiped it and was afraid to hock it. Here it is. Couldn't miss for that fool design."

Otto wiped his hands carefully, reached for the solitaire. So excited was he that he spoke for some moments in German. Then he looked up; and tears were streaming down his seamed face.

"Pitcher, you are a goot poy. Villum," he informed him, "iss in trouble. Somebody iss trying to make him guilty of stealing—my Villum. He didn't steal. Villum aindt dot kind."

Pitcher nodded. "We won't argue that, Otto. But listen to me. You don't bet on the ponies much, do you?"

"I don't bet at all," Otto disclaimed.

"You'd bet," Pitcher suggested, "if it was on a getaway horse that's due to knock some of Willie's enemies for a row of flagstaffs, wouldn't you?"

Otto slammed the counter with his fist. "You bet I would."

"All right." Pitcher leaned closer. "Willie's in for five or six hundred, ain't he?"

Otto nodded. "How'd you guess?"

"I asked questions—this morning. Listen. You put up that ring and sink it all on Knowlton—in the sixth. I'm on him."

"Iss dot straight goods, Pitcher?"

"You just bet it is. This gang I'm telling you about's shooting on Jo Boggs. Enchanto will be the public choice. We'll get ten to one."

"Py Golly!" Otto said. "I'll do it."

"Don't breathe it to a soul," Pitcher warned, "except a little slim girl, who'll tell you I sent her. She'll be around just after the fifth race. S'long. Gotta hustle down and check in."

PITCHER heard many veiled allusions to the sixth race in the afternoon. Stooks Weaver, who was to ride Jo Boggs, wore a grin which all but gave him away. Johnny Driggs, who learned just after the first race that Pitcher had been substituted to ride in his place, sulked in a corner of the room. Once or twice overtures were made to Pitcher by various riders, but the jockey paid no heed. Instead, just after Mack Stevens had brought down the favorite to victory in the fifth race, Pitcher called the premier rider aside. "Getaway horse in the sixth," he said. "Reckon you heard about Jo Boggs."

Mack said he had. "What's the idea of Tobey Green's switch? Thought he'd tied the can to you."

Pitcher lowered his voice. "Mack, I made him give me the mount. Listen—Jo Boggs ain't going to cop that heat."

Stevens whistled. "You'll have a scrap on your hands, with this bunch counting their money already."

"You wanta see Snoots Warder and his gang clean up?" Pitcher demanded.

"Not by a long shot."

"That's why I'm riding Knowlton," Pitcher told him. "Slip the news to Irish Gray, won't you? I may need both of you guys when I get back from the scales."

"We'll be here with bells on," Mack replied. "Shooting on the colt yourself?"

"Every cent I've got," Pitcher said.

STOOKS WEAVER let Jo Boggs break out of line on post parade. Restraining his mount alongside Pitcher, Weaver leaned over. "The bunch is down on my horse. You know what that means."

"Yeah," Pitcher grinned. "And I'm down on my horse. You know what that means."

"We'll get you," Weaver threatened.

"Tell it to the starter," Pitcher derided. "You'll get no blood money out of Snoots Warder today. I'm going to show you platers up—you pikers!"

Weaver dropped back. It was evident he was passing the bad news along. Results began to show up at the post when practically every entry in the race was made to swerve against Knowlton. Pitcher offered no comment, eyes on Starter Drake. And that official, wise through years of service, sensed the rather crude efforts to disable Pitcher and Knowlton.

Calling his assistants over, Drake whispered a few words, then straightened. "I'm on to you boys," he announced. "Bill—put daylight on either side of Pitcher. Now. The next man who bumps into Knowlton gets set down so long he'll forget what a saddle looks like. Ready. Go!"

It was a cutthroat business from the barrier's rise. Enchanto shot into the lead, against the rail. And Weaver went to work on Jo Boggs with whip and body; that was very necessary, for the plater was slow to get into his stride. He had been raced too much for his age. Jo Boggs was mediocre to begin with, a scrub outbreak in a thoroughbred line.

Pitcher Justin was not asleep. He let Jo Boggs get out to set the pace with Enchanto. As it was at six furlongs, Knowlton could wait, at least for the run up the back stretch. Pitcher's diagnosis of the frame-up was that Enchanto would keep out in front until they reached the head of the stretch, where Jo Boggs, under the whip, would be allowed to forge ahead.

Twice Pitcher essayed to slip through on the rail; but that move was promptly checkmated. It appeared as if every jockey in the race had his eye on Knowlton. And Pitcher's heart fell as he realized he must fight his way around the field. This meant losing valuable time. So, instead of getting Knowlton to within striking distance of Enchanto in the turn, Pitcher had to be satisfied with a poor third, and still eight lengths to make up.

Pitcher leaned forward, let out a wrap. Somewhere, ahead in the stands, was a slim, breathless girl, praying for his victory. And Otto Shultz—

Knowlton felt the whip. Bad-tempered the colt was, but no sulker. At the first touch, he leaped forward and lengthened his stride. And with the gain in speed, Pitcher felt rather than saw the curve straighten out. They were at the head of the stretch.

"Now!" the jockey shrilled. "Go after 'em, boy. Run like you never run before!"

But Jo Boggs seemed fairly to skim the course ahead, abreast of the fleeting Enchanto. There had been an ultimate reserve of speed carefully hidden from the public—a reserve nursed along, to be unleashed by unpleasant little Stooks Weaver.

"He's gotta blow up," Pitcher cried to his mount. "He's just gotta. Go after him, boy!"

Enchanto's rider ducked head beneath elbow and glanced backward. At the sight of the oncoming Knowlton he went to his whip with might and main. Like a flash Pitcher realized another fact; the Warder bunch were covering upon Enchanto, playing him to run second.

Pitcher did some of the swiftest thinking of his young life. They were an eighth of a mile from the finish posts. Knowlton was crawling up, head lapped on Enchanto, a length behind Jo Boggs. If he could delay Knowlton's rush for another sixteenth, Enchanto could be forced to third place. That would lose both bets for Snoots Warder. Jo Boggs would come in second.

"It's a chance," Pitcher breathed. And for about ten jumps of his mount, he hand-rode. The stands took it as surrender. Tobey Green, leaning over the rail, raised his face and invoked the skies to testify what a rotten jockey Pitcher Justin had become.

And then, as if in denial, Pitcher began to ride. Again he went to his whip, playing a tattoo on Knowlton's flanks. The response was such that the stands roared in ecstasy. On and on and on Knowlton came, by Enchanto and on even terms with the tiring Jo Boggs.

It was when Knowlton and Jo Boggs were

exactly abreast that Stooks Weaver, beside himself at seeing the race lost, reached for Knowlton's line. It was such an utterly foolish thing to do, and so obviously witnessed by the judges, that Pitcher was amazed for the time. Weaver couldn't have done it but for one thing; and that was to permit Enchanto to finish ahead of both.

ACCIDENT, rather than intention, solved Pitcher's problem. Still lashing Knowlton, he missed. And his whip swept behind his back and struck Stooks Weaver just behind the ear. Weaver's hand released the line. And Knowlton forged ahead, to win by a nose.

Now Pitcher remembered but one thing, chiefly. And that was his own part. Certainly the judges would disqualify Jo Boggs—or at least Weaver. And by the same reasoning, they had sufficient grounds to disqualify Knowlton. For he had struck Weaver in a race.

There was a pronounced silence as the riders returned and saluted the stewards. Pitcher glanced up, saw that the winning numbers were being withheld.

"Reckon me an' Stooks get ruled off this time," he commented. "All well."

So, after weighing, he hastened up into the tiny stand before he could be summoned. Judge Roberts, portly and gray, was waiting.

"Gentlemen," Pitcher announced, "set me down for life—tie a can to me. But for the love of Mike, don't disqualify Knowlton. He'd have won anyway."

"Why?" Judge Roberts inquired. "Did you think we were going to suspend you?"

Pitcher was bewildered. And then he caught a glimpse of Tobey Green—and Starter Drake—waiting in a corner.

"Cripes!" Pitcher said. "Figured you'd act because I whacked Stooks Weaver one with my whip."

Judge Roberts gazed at Pitcher severely; but his eyes were twinkling. He turned to the other stewards. "We were expecting you to put in a claim against Weaver for grabbing your mount's lines. As for the—other—well, we assume it was an accident."

Pitcher flushed. "And you ain't disqualifying Tobey's horse?"

"We are not. Run along now. Weaver's case comes up next."

Mack Stevens loomed defiant, like Horatius at the bridge, barring the way to the jockeys who had participated in the sixth race. Over his shoulder could be seen the freckled countenance of wiry Irish Gray.

"Any of you skates looking for trouble with Pitcher Justin?" Mack inquired. "If you are, we got a through-the-board ticket on Pitcher. No—no likee trouble? That's better."

Neither did Stooks Weaver, as for that. But he didn't count; for the stewards, after careful deliberation, had set down Stooks for a good many years.

OTTO SHULTZ made Pitcher his guest that night. Sara and little William were there, a fact which rendered the wide-eared rider quite self-conscious. In skull cap and slippers, Otto looked the part of benevolence itself; and he was. For the host produced a bottle with faded label, one that Otto had ordered from some underground winestore along the Moselle.

Sara was in the kitchen, singing as she worked about the stove. And William Junior ran to and fro.

"Villum is coming directly," Otto announced. "Twelve hundert I collect on Knowlton—five hundert of it for Villum to straighten out—debts." Otto choked. "What a friendt you are, Pitcher!"

William's entrance cut off further remarks. He entered rather apologetically, eyes downcast—at least one eye—for the other was black.

Sara emerged from the kitchen. Running to her husband, she threw both arms about him. "Honey—what happened? Your eye?"

"Met Eddie Martin—leaving town," William muttered. "Jumped on me for nothing."

Pitcher grinned. Somehow, he felt greatly relieved. He was still grinning when William's good eye lighted upon him.

"You know Pitcher Justin?" Otto inquired. "Our—best friendt."

"Oh, can that talk!" Pitcher said. "Everything's jake. Let's forget it. And say, folks! I gotta make it snappy. Wanta to be down at the station in half an hour. Gotta see that a girl gets away. She's—going home."

Another of Sam Carson's stories of the Kentucky racetrack next month.

A Drama of the Seashore

The Finger *of* Fire

Two Youngsters with a Precious Secret Face the Night—and Unscrupulous Fanatics Hot After a Hidden Modern Treasure

By George Kibbe Turner

Illustrations by Albin Henning

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

I WAS plodding up the sand hills, with the whistling buoy, Old Man's Misery, droning in my ears, when I came upon her. She was a foreigner, evidently, for her voice when she spoke had that exactness of pronunciation that one associates with cultured Continentals.

The next evening, as the red and white of the lightship, Studdin' Sails Shoals, were flaring across the water, I walked by the house where she lived. Passing near the lighted windows of the ground floor, I hoped to catch a glimpse of the woman whom I had startled on the sand dunes. Suddenly the sound of a voice, racked with pain, came to me, and I went and looked underneath the lowered shade.

Near the center of the room, strapped solidly to the stockiest of the chairs, was a tall, thin man whom I recognized as her father, a scientist of whom we in the village knew little. On his head was a tall device like a Cossack's cap, and before him, with a lamp in his hand, stood the biggest man that I ever saw, evidently threatening him. The girl stood somewhat apart, half hidden in the shadows. With a wrench at the screening, I jumped into the room. Suddenly the place was plunged in darkness; there was a jangling of broken glass and the huge man with the flaming face was gone.

I struck a match and lit the lamp. The man in the chair, tortured by a device such as I had never before seen, had already died of exhaustion.

"Don't you think," I said, "we'd better go and get help?"

"Go," she cried. "Yes, at once!"

I peered out of the door and saw the figure of a man, black against the sky, guarding the path inland.

"Come on," I said to her. "This way, so the house will be between us—and that one on the hill."

It was not so very dark; the stars were thick and dim. There was no one—nothing on the whole level place but the sea lights: the white and red lights of Studdin' Sails, the keen white light from Great Point, and out to the westward the Barnacle light that jumped and stopped, and over the whole thing the beam of the Great North light wheeled and was gone.

We had almost reached the beach when she stumbled and fell.

"It is my foot. I cannot rise."

That altered things. Hastily I took her light body in my arms and carried her to the shadow of a wreck, lying on the sand. Her ankle was severely sprained, and I bandaged it as best I could.

"Tell me," I said, "who are you? What is this thing that is going on here?"

For a moment she was silent.

"I'm Irina Vonstrom," she said. "It is

the Zetka, the society of the great revolution that will save mankind by terror and murder across the world."

"This man, who is he?"

"Mannik, the one who has killed so many for the Zetka."

"And you?"

"We are traitors to the Zetka. It concerns the Formula, my father's invention by which coal and wood may be transformed directly to electricity. It is priceless."

"And so they come to get this Formula back?"

"Yes. It is hidden." She pulled a slip of paper from her dress and handed it to me. "The directions for my memory—where to find the hiding-place."

I read: "Studdin' Sails. Great Point. Barnacle. North. Gneiss 2.2."

Aloud, I reflected: "If Mannik desired this paper, why did he run when he saw me?"

"He feared some one was following him also. . . . Look! What is that?"

Our eyes strained in the semidarkness.

"It is he!" she said. "It is! He is coming here!"

HE WAS, sure as fate. "Come!" I said, and helped her down from the wreck, and made her crouch under the shadow of its side. I waited myself, watching, my head poked up over the sand bank in a bunch of beach grass. He kept coming on—coming on. Had he seen us, got wind of us some way? Or was he just coming down that natural slope which led our way?

I crawled back under the black shadow of the side of the wreck, beside Irina Vonstrom; crouched down, waiting. Then suddenly, out of the noiseless sand, we saw this black figure come out against the sky, stand, look out from the rim of the sand hill, not twenty-five feet away from us.

After a year or two of waiting, he moved on—down the bank, by the farther end of the wreck and out upon the beach. We peered after him, around the corner of the wreck, seeing his figure grow dim and disappear against the slate-black of the sea. And now I noticed that Irina Vonstrom was shivering.

"Why?" I asked her.

"It was Nadsky," she whispered.

"Who's that?"

"The leader of all—who plans all for the Zetka, in this country."

"Is he so terrible, then," I said, "—so much worse than Mannik?" For she had shown more dread at merely seeing him than in all the time there in that attic.

"All are worse," she told me, "who believe most in the Holy War—this new faith. Much more so than mere beasts like Mannik. And Nadsky is worst of all."

"Was he watching outside," I asked her then, "do you think—on guard there—for Mannik?"

"So I had thought but—"

"But what?"

"But did he seem to you to be ever gone from that hilltop—or long enough to go down to the house?"

"No," I said, "I don't think so. It doesn't look to me, from that, and all his actions, as if he had the least idea about Mannik—or what's gone on inside the house."

"But then—" she said, and I felt her grip my arm.

"Then what?" I asked her after a minute.

"Could it be," she said, "that he was watching—not guarding Mannik? Could it be Nadsky—the Zetka—from which Mannik ran tonight, mistaking you?"

"You mean that they were hunting him?"

"Exactly—like ourselves."

"As a traitor—for betraying them?"

"As he would most certainly be—would he not," asked Irina Vonstrom, "if he came to find the formula of my father—for himself—without them?"

I looked around, carefully, all over the place. "One thing, I believe, is pretty clear," I said, "from all we've seen—and all this Nadsky's done: whether he's watching him or guarding him, Mannik still stays there, inside that house, just where we left him."

"It would seem so, yes," she said.

"And this one's gone now—up the beach. And there's nothing else stirring. So now's the chance for us to start!" I said, standing up before her.

"But—I cannot go."

"No," I said. "But I can carry you!"

She came now; she knew I would not take "No" for an answer.

SHE crawled up the first sand bluff; I took her in my arms, and we started out ahead for the place where we would find safety—the black fringe of the scrub pines on the western edge of the bare open sand plain.

We plodded on in silence, watching. There was nothing, no one; we were absolutely alone, from anything we saw or heard, except those lights and voices of the sea that made us seem still more so.

From behind us to the north came the one sound we could hear above the growing grumble of the sea, the hoarse voice of Old Man's Misery, grown louder the past few hours—to a grunt from a wail. The wind was rising, backing into the northeast—bringing in from the dark out there the freshness and commotion of the sea. Across the sand we saw the sea lights and their eternal signaling. And overhead, in the damp air, the huge white bar of the Great North light still came and turned and came again.

We were alone, as solitary as if we were the only two inhabitants of the world. We spoke not at all—or in whispers. Her arms were about my neck, the warmth of her body against mine. We stopped, rested, went on; and strange crazy fancies came over me as I plodded on, carrying her across that dark, desolate, lonely sand. It seemed as if everything that had been was gone—time and space, past and future; that I was going on and on, carrying her through the dark—we two alone.

"Stop. You must stop. You grow weary," she whispered in my ear.

"No. This is nothing. I could go on carrying you forever."

"No. No."

I set her down once more, and looked around; and saw now to where we had come. We were almost at the place where I had spoken to her for the first time, not yet thirty-six hours ago. I saw her, as she stood in that first dusk—the bar of light above her, the sound of the surf, the scent of the bayberry bushes—straight and slim and foreign and far away from any life of mine, as a princess in an old-time song. And here I was holding her, carrying her, getting her out of her trouble. And over beyond there, just ahead of us, lay the black outline of the scrub pines against the sky, where we should be in just a few minutes now, and reach safety. And thirty-six hours from now, no doubt, she would be gone, so far as I was concerned, forever.

"But they can't take this, at least, away from me," I said to myself, and I looked around the wide dark place again, and once more picked up her slim body in my arms and started on toward safety—toward the wood, passing off from the sand ridge which hid Spindle Hollow.

Suddenly, at one side of us, a spot of black bayberry bushes lurched, grunted, stood up.

Irina Vonstrom straightened in my arms. "Mannik!" she cried.

He was up, full bulk against the sky. I stopped.

He aimed his pistol point-blank at me. "Coom! Coom!" his thick guttural voice said. "Ve vill see now vhat is done to government agents who get too funnee."

"Government agents," I said with a start, seeing what it might be was in his thick head.

"Shut up!" he said. "Coom. March!"

We started back, he driving me with his pistol; I still carrying Irina. I can see it all, feel the burden in my arms, recall every detail, every swing of the great light, every grunt of the distant buoy, up to the time when he drove me into the black entrance to the house—and I remember nothing.

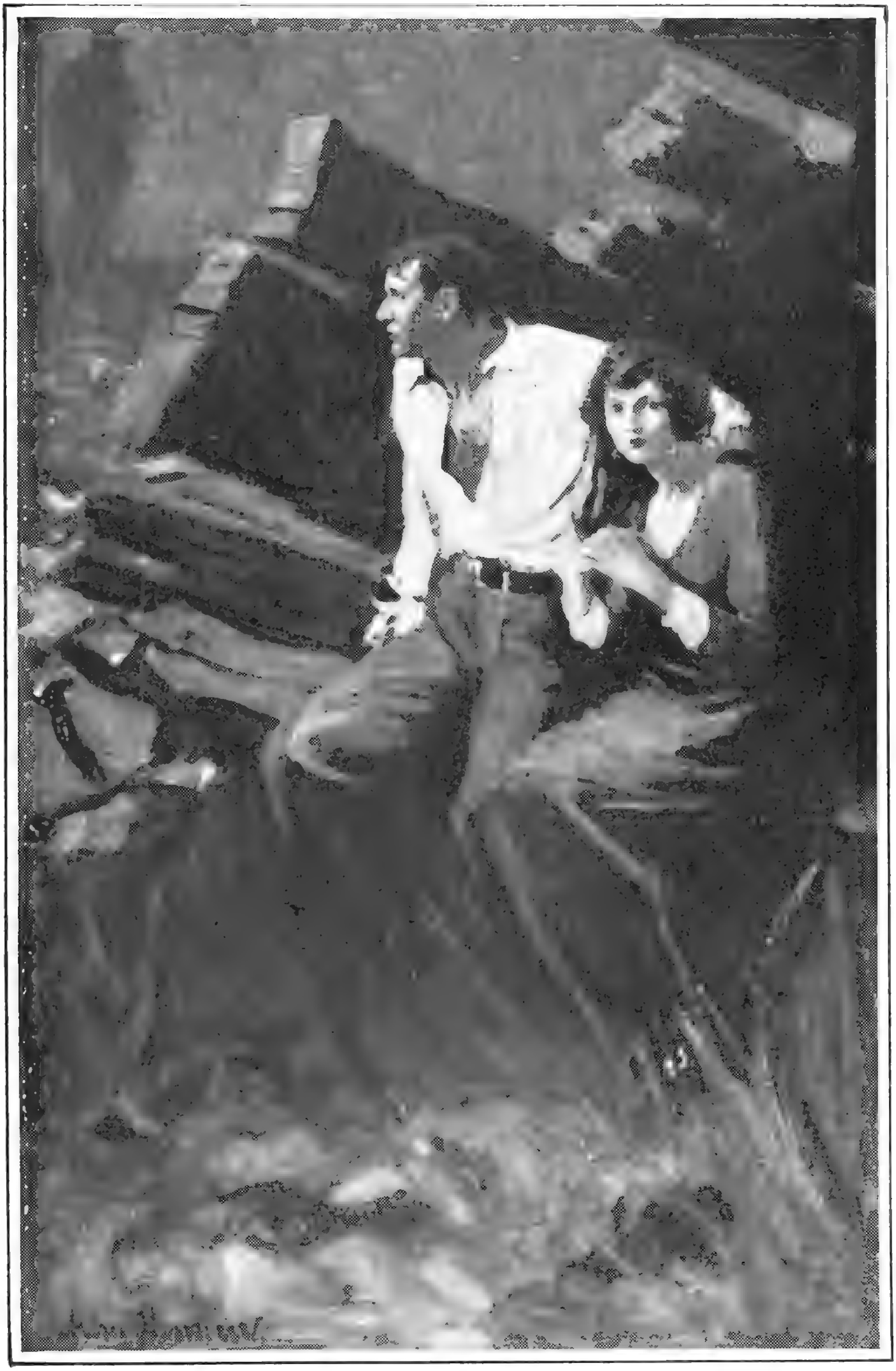
I TRIED to move. I couldn't. I struggled hand and foot, like a man fighting, fighting to loose himself from the clutch of a nightmare. And I could neither see, nor move, nor speak.

I opened my eyes, slowly, afraid; saw something through the dark—a face—the dim white face of a woman—of Irina Vonstrom.

"You come back," she whispered. "You are not dead."

Another voice I knew spoke through the dark—the thick and guttural voice of that great Hungarian—that professional murderer. "He vill vish so, perhaps," it said, "before he gets through answerink vat I now ask." And he drew her back from me—from the chair to which I seemed to be tied.

The thought came over me like a panic: what was it? Was I there myself in the same position that that man, that dead chemist, had been in a few hours before; with that thing—that Cossack's Cap on? Was I there in the same room with him—in the dark? I struggled crazily, I admit it; tore my body to get loose from that chair—or whatever it was I was tied to. And then



Suddenly, out of the noiseless sand, we saw a black figure come out against the sky, not twenty-five feet away from us.

I stopped—feeling a small cold ring against my temple.

"Listen, spy and fool," said Mannik's voice. "Hear closely! I gife you vun chance—and vun only. Now I release your voice that I can speak with you—question you. But if you cry, make callinks to the others, then before your second cry cooms out, you feel the good effects of this vunce more—but for the last time—upon your head!"

"Do not," the voice of Irina Vonstrom added, "by any means call out. I have promised for you that neither you nor I shall call."

And now Mannik took the pistol muzzle from my skin and started to release my mouth. I set my mind upon what he was doing. For it seemed to me that, though my eyes were free, the gag upon my mouth was a strap—a strap like that upon the Cossack's Cap.

When he was done, he asked me his first question, standing close beside me in the dark. "How many are those vith you?"

"How many what?" I asked him, mumbling with my stiff lips, where that gag had been upon them.

"How many other spies and secret service agents, fool?"

"I am no secret service agent," I answered him.

"Liar! You lie!" said Mannik, and struck me with his heavy hand in the face.

I could only groan and take it. But I could hear Irina at once taking my part—and holding back his arm.

"Fool and murderer!" she said. "Would a government agent come against you unarmed?"

He answered nothing now, at all; and Irina went on. "This is no secret agent, to arrest you, but a young gentleman who lives in this place. Many times have I seen him now."

He laughed an ugly laugh. "So you vill say," he told her. "Let us see then—if you know. Let us see, if he is one livink here, vhat he vill know. Your name, vhat is it?" he said, now starting questioning me.

"Elnathan Bearse," I told him.

"So then you lif here, and you know all about the land that lies about?"

"I think I do," I said.

"Vell then," he asked me, "if you had coom here, vith others followink you; and behind you, you saw that they had coom, blockink the main road, the bridge at the village—then how vould you act to go—to escape them?"

"How could you," I asked back, "without a boat?"

"Then it is an island here—you vill tell me?"

"To all intents and purposes," I told him, "except that one place at the main bridge."

"Vhere you and your other spies are now lyink," he said, anger showing once more in his voice.

"But he is not, I say," Irina Vonstrom said again. "He is not a government spy."

"Then who," asked Mannik loudly, "was that vith him?"

"With him?"

"Yes—the one who stands vatchink when he goes—upon the hill!"

I saw it now. Irina Vonstrom had guessed it, but only half. Instead of guarding Mannik, this other one, this Nadsky, the leader of the crowd, was watching him. And Mannik, seeing only his dim outline in the dark, thought it was others hunting him—government spies—with me. That explained it all—his fear, his running from me that first of the evening, thinking, it seemed, that I must be a secret service man after him, and a gang with me.

IRINA VONSTROM spoke more quickly than I, her voice hardening strangely. "So that is it?" she asked slowly.

"Vhat iss?" he asked her.

"Do you not know who that was—that man who watched upon the hill?"

"Who?"

"It was Nadsky," said Irina Vonstrom; and went on, when he was silent, speaking fast, fiercely, harshly.

"So that was it!" she cried. "It was you—not the others, who have killed my father. Not the Zetka, but you—murderer! Thief! Hungarian dog!" Her voice grew shriller and faster as she said it. "But for one thing," she cried, "I'm glad—glad! You were not wise—you turned traitor to the Zetka—and I shall see its vengeance—the act of Nadsky—now as it comes to you."

Mannik laughed at this—a heavy, hearty laugh. "Nadsky," he said, "the fool! And all the other fools and mad and crazy men! They are far from here today. They flee.

They run by sea—all running fast, from the government, which follows them. And I—I only stay behind, unfrightened, unafraid."

"You soon will be afraid," said Irina slowly.

"Of what?"

"Of Nadsky, when he comes tonight—and very soon now—following his watching."

"Oho," said Mannik. "Oho—let him coom, then. Let him coom. I stand here vaiting for Nadsky. I vish for him to coom now—you liar!"

And as he said it, from outside came this level voice, through the window—the voice which I knew must be that of Nadsky. "He comes!" it said.

And no one inside answered. The latch clicked in the old front door.

"Coom not in," said the voice of Mannik—the black outline of his body going behind the partition toward the hall.

"Do not fear," said the cool, level voice from the opening door. "I shall not shoot. But do you not shoot yet either. Not until I give you the knowledge I bring with me—what you should know of those who come after me."

The other did not answer.

"If you wish to once more escape the death by hanging, or the electric chair, which is so unpleasing to you."

A grunt answered him from Mannik's hiding-place, an answer that the speaker must have been waiting for.

"Light the lamp, and I will show you," said Nadsky. "For it seems, from what I overhear from you in the last few minutes, that you know something also of the danger which tonight hangs over you and me."

And now speech from Mannik, that he was forcing, came at last. "Light the lamp yourself," he said. "I will not stand a target for you while lightink it."

"I will for you," said Nadsky, "without fear—knowing that you will not shoot one who alone can save you from the death which follows now so closely—from the hunters of the secret service."

Finding the lamp, by Irina's and Mannik's directions, he struck a match, and I saw his coarse pock-marked face above its glow, as he was lighting it.

Here was the second man, I saw—the pock-marked foreigner that Irina Vonstrom had wanted that first night to be warned of. The lamp lighted and the glass chimney put on, he stood with emotionless face across the table, looking at the other, the red-faced murderer, who stood watching him with a rat's quick fear in his eyes, his big pistol ready in his hand.

The short man with thick shoulders, and small black, beady eyes—coarse-featured and yellow-skinned—looked coldly back at the huge red-cheeked Hungarian—watching every motion that he made, with a look of contempt and an easy appearance of giving orders in his face.

"YOU may pull down the shades if you have fear," he said to Mannik, a sneer in his voice also. "Although tonight they will not come for you—not in the night."

And while Mannik, after a minute, lumbered about, pulling down the shades, the other looked us over. We sat, I saw now that the light was on, not in that old-time best room, where Mannik's clumsiness had killed Irina's father, but in the other room to the eastward—the common, everyday furnished room, which the old-fashioned people had used for dining-room and sitting-room.

Irina sat now in a low old-fashioned yellow rocker with a cane back, watching him with big dark eyes. He looked at her with no expression in his leathery face, and back again to me.

"Who is this?" he asked her.

Before she answered, Mannik spoke for her. "He is one of them—the damned government's bloodhounds."

"Upon whom you use, I see, the Cossack's Cap," said Nadsky. And I knew now that what I had feared was true—that thing was really on my head.

"Not yet," said Mannik.

And now Irina spoke—to Nadsky.

"What would you think," she said to him scornfully, "you who have more intelligence than a simple ox? Would the United States government send out capturing the Zetka an unarmed man—with but one hand also? Ask him," she said, looking over now to Mannik, "to explain to you how this would be."

"What is he, then?" Nadsky questioned her, when the great red-faced fool stood silent.

"He is a gentleman who lives here; who comes upon the beach; who comes tonight to aid me, when Mannik here has killed my father—with too much torture from the Cossack's Cap."

Nadsky's questioning eyes turned to Mannik, looking like a performing bear.

"Through the next door, across the hall," said Irina, her voice dull, "you will see it for yourself—what this, your murderer, has done."

Nadsky's sharp eyes still studied Mannik.

"He comes," Irina went on, "to steal the Formula from us—for himself. For sale, no doubt, to those who here in America would pay so greatly for it. And doing so, he kills—he murders—and still gets nothing."

"Is this true?" asked Nadsky, staring at Mannik, where he still stood as he had after coming back from pulling down the last of the shades at the east window; and got no answer.

A hard look came into the pock-marked face. "Traitors—forever—on all sides!" he said harshly.

The big man answered quickly, and as harshly.

"Traitor, no," he cried. "Good anarchist—yes. As anarchist, I coom and go, and do as I myself desire—with no vun, no Nadsky and no Zetka—no vild madmen telling me how I go and where and why—for saving all the vorld by their mad dreams—a handful amonk millions."

The other watched him, his leathery face expressionless, except for his small and beady eyes.

"Enough," said Mannik, flinching back from them, and making a show of fearlessness with his big gun. "Enough! You are no more my commander—my boss! Tell me vhat it is you hafe to tell—if anythink—of those who follow us."

I could see them both from where they had me strapped into that heavy common chair—Nadsky to my left, by the old-fashioned dining table with the red-checked tablecloth; Mannik to my right, with his pistol, staring out of his deep-set Asiatic-looking eyes. Beyond him, on the farther wall, I saw one of those old-time chromos those old Rich people had—you have seen it, probably—called Innocence. A little young girl with yellow hair, in a white dress and light blue stockings and tasseled shoes, stands by a swing, with a hoop and a little white woolly dog, looking out simpering.

"HOW much do you know of those following now?" asked the one with the pock-marked face finally.

But the red-faced giant did not answer.

"When did the government begin to get the clue—to these two, the father and daughter, that hide here? Was it after we had ours?"

Mannik did not answer.

"Or did you learn that later—not until you got here?"

"I vill tell you vhat I vish to—vhen I vish," said Mannik. "Now you vill speak. Go on."

"Gladly, willingly," said Nadsky. "But I will tell it briefly—without what comes between. You know well those who have followed us so long—whom we so long have watched back. They are here, I know—because I myself have seen them, with my own eyes tonight!"

The big man, eyeing him sharply now, asked him where.

"Over there," said Nadsky, pointing west. "In the little village there!"

"And how do you yourself get here?" asked Mannik, still eyeing him, every movement.

"Have you not seen that ship—that sailing-ship—that rides outside?"

Mannik's face told him that he had.

"That is how we go—escaping into Russia. And tonight," he said, while we all stared and listened, "I come alone, rowing myself in—when no one else will dare—to see what perhaps I myself can do, with this other traitor—this dead man there. And find you here before me!"

"And then vhat?" asked Mannik.

"I saw them—those agents that we know—all there," he said, again pointing westward.

"Who?" asked Mannik.

He named them. "Coming this time," he said, "as telephone men—that repair the wires."

I gave a little exclamation, without thinking.

"So! You have seen them, then. You know!" said Nadsky.

A great change had come over the big murderer Mannik now. From fresh red, his face had gone a yellow-white. He was suddenly afraid—with the quick panic fear of an animal.

"Vhat shall ve do now?" he asked.

It was just the question that the pock-marked man had been waiting for.

"You must come back with me," he said, "upon the ship—after first we get what we both come here for."

THE expression of the great murderer changed once more; the bright red came back into his shiny cheeks again. "To Russia?" he asked. "Vith you?"

Nadsky nodded.

"And be punished—no doubt killed by you—for vhat I do here now—as vhat you vill call traitor!"

"Not sent to death—no," said Nadsky. "As you will surely be, waiting here."

But the other man gave a hard, distrustful laugh. "Gife myself in your hands?" he said. "For vhat you like to do to me? No. Nefer.

"Nefer!" he said again, after a minute's hard breathing. "Rather vould I shoot you first." And he brought out, with a blustering gesture, his big gun again.

"And then what?" asked Nadsky, standing with not the smallest change of expression on his leathery face. "Then what? Then again would you be in the House of Death—strapped once more in the electric chair, with no one this time to save you!"

The fear which now all the time lay back in the big brute's eyes, shone forth again at this hint, whatever it was, of something he had evidently gone through sometime. But he did not speak yet.

"It is this way between us, is it not?" the dry level voice of the pock-marked man went on. "You there, it may be," he said, pointing at the pistol in the big man's hand, "have the power of death, yes! But I, on my part, alone have the power of life—for both!"

The Hungarian stared at him dumbly.

"The power of escape—the only power—unless," he went on, in the other's stillness, "you wish to take the chance again—the certainty, this time, of death—for all your murders here—by here remaining, surrounded by your enemies—the agents of the government, who now surround you on the land, so that by no possibility you may escape."

The big man still stood silent—balky as a frightened horse.

"So you will come with me, by my one path of safety—by boat—to sea—to the ship—to the council of your comrades and to Russia."

And now speech came at last to the thick red lips of the Hungarian. "No. No!" he said. "No. Nefer! I do not trust them. I do not trust you. Even now—in this—you no doubt lie."

"You can stay easily here then, and see for yourself," said the leathery-faced older man; and stopped to let the fear he knew his words would bring sink in. "Or if you wish," he said then, "if you have enough courage, we will leave it all to Fate—to Chance—to decide."

"How?" asked Mannik, giving his first sign of any willingness to agree.

Nadsky stood for a minute thinking. "Why not this?" he asked—while the other watched him with his everlasting suspicion in his eyes. "We come here both for the same purpose. We neither wish to die. And yet, it seems, you would rather die than to go back with me to those whom you have deserted. Is that not so?"

Mannik gave just a grunt in answer.

"Why should we not then," went on Nadsky, "make first a truce—and then let Fate determine who will stay and die." Only the mention of the word made that great shiny-faced coward who watched him wince.

"You," said Nadsky, going on with his proposal, "have the power of death in your hands—though indeed I have arms also. We shall place them on the table—thus!" he said, and started evidently to bring out a pistol from a pocket.

"Hold!" said Mannik loudly—straightening the arm with his own gun toward him.

"Or, if you like it more," said Nadsky, drawing back his hand, "you may take the weapon out and place it on the table for yourself—giving you," he said, "the entire power of death over me—which, after all, is but fair!"

MANNIK stared at him—not getting the sense of the remark through his thick head.

"For do I not still hold in my possession," asked Nadsky, explaining it, "the power of life—the knowledge of the one passage for escape from death? That is, if we shall agree and go tonight—before those who wait beyond there—come tomorrow here and take us."

The thing was wearing on the other man—that big frightened animal; and the easy offer of the Russian to give up his weapon seemed to convince him—when he offered him practically a guarantee that what he said was true. But he still said nothing, standing obstinate, listening—till suddenly he spoke, a thought coming to him. "Vhat if I force you to stay—vhile I escape?"

"You might, perhaps," said Nadsky, and now his beady eyes grew darker. "I think not so, myself. But if so—if you could force me to do anything—what then? How would you escape, to where, by night—by the open sea—without my direction, my assistance?"

He had Mannik there; I saw that. No one could get out from where that rowboat must lie, not very far.

"Is that not true, what I say?" he asked, turning to me now. "Could he escape at night, by boat, to any other shore, from that outside shore where, hidden, this boat lies?"

"Not he nor any other man," I said—with the voice of that Old Man's Misery in my ears, as I said it.

"It is not possible," he said, "as this man tells you. You cannot from here go elsewhere and land upon this coast, across these treacherous currents—at night, at least. And with the day your hunters come to take you. So that will leave you, as me, just one place to go—the ship, which, once going off this coast the way that I will show you, will be easy to find and reach, even in the dark."

"So that's it," I said to myself, seeing his idea. Coming in, finding this cove, in which he could come to land in quiet weather, he thought he could get out of there at any time—not knowing the trouble he would have in getting out of the mouth of the Old Slue in the freshening easterly wind.

"Unless it is," Nadsky was saying to the Hungarian, "that you cannot row a boat?"

"I can row. Yes."

"Very well then," said Nadsky. "Let us do this, then—let us decide, by chance—by coin, by card, or as you will—who will go, and who must stay—and die."

The great coward before him winced again at even the hearing of the word.

"But how," he said, an idea finally coming into his thick head, "how if you do not return—and I go in your place? What would be done to me, by the others upon the ship?"

"That would be most simple. It can be directed by a letter from me to them explaining. For they, naturally, will not know of your work—what I find you doing here. And in my letter what I say will be decided on by you—just what I shall write. And then also, you will bring with you what all desire most—to take on with them to Russia: the discovery—the Formula of Power."

I saw a gleam come into the big man's eyes—a look of cunning. He had no idea, I think, from the first that he would let this card game decide what he would do—no more than Nadsky had—not if it went against him! But until that time arrived both of them would play, watching to see what the other one would do when he found he was the loser.

"Very goot," said Mannik. "Let us decide—by play!"

"But how?"

"As you vill please."

A NEW look came into the still face of the Russian—a kind of smile; but an evil one, I thought then. "We have much time," he said. "It is not yet late at night. And I am sure, amply sure, we shall not be disturbed by those others, those police agents, until another day. Why then should we not take time—make tea—find comfort, for a short time? Have you cards here?" he asked Irina.

"Yes," she told him.

"I tell you then what we shall do," said Nadsky, smiling. "Let us decide this properly, and for our amusement, with an old game, which we all know. By Twenty-one, perhaps? And after thus deciding, we shall both be told by this young lady, our one-time comrade, where we shall find the paper, the treasure which we seek—while we sit properly at our ease, as we drink our tea. As partly Russian, you will have a samovar here?" he asked of Irina then.

"Yes."

"We will have tea quickly, then," said Nadsky. "This young lady, perhaps, will prepare it. Then we will play."

"But she can't walk," I said, when I saw Irina start as if to get upon her feet. And

I told him how she had her injury, when we ran from Mannik.

"I then shall get it," he said, after hearing me, "—the tea. And he the cards, if you will direct us," said Nadsky to Irina, in a half-joking voice. And Irina told them where they were.

Before long the Russian was back with that brass foreign thing—that samovar that holds the hot water; and the little pot of black-looking tea that those foreigners brew to dilute with it.

Nadsky had changed all at once, it seemed; grown more talkative and joking. "What is a Russian without his tea—and a charming woman to serve it?" he said, with a deep stiff bow to Irina, and placed her at the table before the high brass thing—that samovar. And with an air you would never have expected of him, he passed a cup of tea to Mannik, helped Irina and himself, and excused himself, even, from not being able to serve me—because my position "would not permit of it."

"And now," he said, when this was done, "let us have our amusement. Let Fate decide between us—as brave men, not afraid to die—in a proper spirit of sport and abandon!"

Then, going to the left of us, the two sat down to play their gambling game on the old oval table, across the old-time red-checked tablecloth.

Nadsky, Irina and I sat on the same side of the table; across from us Mannik sat, where Nadsky sent him—the light of the old-time glass kerosene lamp strong on his bright red face. The two guns were laid out upon the table, as part of the stake of their game. "To be the property of the winner, as is only fair," Nadsky had said. "So that all will be determined by Fate at one time."

"Shall we throw for banker?" asked Nadsky now.

"Who will throw?" asked the great Hungarian, sharp suspicion never out of his small eyes.

And I thought, watching them, of what those old-time people—Uncle and Auntie Rich, who had lived there all their lives—would say if they came back and saw these two, at their foreign card game, gambling on their old dining-room table. There was a picture of the old woman, in her younger days, with ringlets and a bonnet, all ready to go to Sunday meeting, that I could see over Mannik's head in an old, old frame upon the farther wall.

The two foreigners sat there, small-eyed, high cheek-boned, starting on that fancy foreign game of cards, with their samovar and their tea, served Russian-fashion, beside them.

"Throw yourself," said Nadsky. "I care not!"

It is a French game—this Twenty-one—a great gambling game, played much in Russia. And with a different count there, from that in other countries. I know this now—though of course I knew nothing then.

The Hungarian, wetting his big thumb, threw cards to first one and then the other—a seven-spot, a Jack, a two-spot, and then an ace.

"Fortune is yours. You are banker," said Nadsky when the ace fell. And he took a sip of tea.

Mannik, after the shuffling and cutting of the cards, did the same, and started dealing. The game is to get exactly twenty-one—by the dealing out of cards, one by one; or as nearly under twenty-one as possible. For going over it at all, you lose.

NADSKY sat before and between us, where both Irina and myself could see his hand. But he made no attempt to hide it from either of us. I made no difference, not knowing the count, either Russian or otherwise; but he must have known that Irina would know and understand everything. Yet he paid no attention to either of us.

"Throw," said Nadsky. And Mannik's heavy fingers gave him a nine-spot.

Mannik dealt now to himself—and then again to Nadsky—a six-spot.

Mannik dealt himself a second card, and looked at both—carefully, secretly—every movement full of caution and suspicion.

Nadsky frowned. His count—of fifteen—was bad. "One more," he said. He turned up into his hand a king which, by Russian count, made nineteen in all—an excellent place to make a stand—only two below the twenty-one.

We looked at Mannik.

"I take no more," he said. His red face shone; and though I was satisfied from the first that neither of them would live up to their stakes in this wild game—unless forced to by some turn of circumstances—I could see the interest of the play grow sharp in the big man's eyes. He had drawn well, I thought, myself, even if I didn't know the counting of the game. His whole face shone with satisfaction he couldn't hide.

Nadsky watched him, with the ghost of a joking smile upon his thick-skinned face. "One for me," he said.

I watched everything, with all my eyes—the cards, the strong lights and shadows on all their faces in the lamplight; and I saw too the expression which came on Irina Vonstrom's face as she heard him say this. There was less than one chance in four—she knew—that Nadsky could win.

That chance did not come—as he did not expect it would. He drew a four-spot.

"You win!" he said, and threw his cards face down upon the table. "You win—and my congratulations!"

And he turned, with a face now entirely without expression, and took another sip of tea from the cup beside his elbow.

"Very good," he said, and wiped his mouth.

The Hungarian sat across from him, the pack of cards still in his thick fingers—still, though winning, watching him with suspicious eyes.

"Very good," said Nadsky, "for yourself! Not so good for me. But so goes life—for me—for all. And so let us go on with what we have still to do. Let us start to find out from this young lady what you now wish to learn, and I would have you learn to take on to Russia, in my place—the Formula, the great prize which they wish there—to your own great benefit and reward."

The big Hungarian stared at him, still suspicious, but still in doubt of what went on, like a thick-witted man at a play.

"After all, what difference!" said Nadsky, still keeping the talk going. "In a few years from now, what difference—if it is you or I who takes it back—this prize—so long as they in Russia—all the people—have it? It is my bad luck only," he said. "So let us go on, forgetting it."

He raised his voice a little—but his face was still. "Come," he said, "let us take each one another cup of tea and go on—to our work."

He got upon his feet and stood beside Irina, where she sat before the little teapot and the big brass urn.

"You will serve," he said to her, "and I will pass. One for you," he said, taking the cup that Mannik gave him. "Though, being Hungarian, you would no doubt wish for coffee more."

He held the cup under the teapot and the faucet of the samovar while Irina poured in the water. He passed it back with no unusual motion that I saw, or Irina either. Then she served him and then herself.

"To bind our bargain! To show our mutual good will," he said—and raised his cup toward Mannik. And Mannik, with his quick suspicious pig's eyes always on him, did the same—and drank.

He drank, and set down his cup. And Nadsky did the same—quite slowly. And as he did this, suddenly the light was out—and the red tablecloth was snatched from the table, carrying everything with it but the lamp, which I saw in a last flash in Nadsky's right hand. In the same flash I saw the face of the great Hungarian, the expression frozen on it, not so much of fear as a great wonder and surprise.

Bang went the samovar, and I heard the smash of the china teapot and the cups on the floor; and the heavier sound—the thump of those two pistols.

And later, but before our eyes yet were used to seeing the dark, the thick, frightened cursing and heavy fall of the man across the table.

NO ONE spoke. There was not a sound in the room. From outside, the noise of the sea came into the silence—the surf pounding more heavily on the beach, and that lonesome sound of Old Man's Misery, a different voice—changing, growing louder: *Grunt. . . . Grunt. . . . Grunt.*

The Russian struck a match, relit the extinguished lamp in his right hand. I saw its glow rise into his pock-marked face—and found my voice at last.

"Dead," I said hoarsely. "Poisoned!"

He took his time about answering, adjusting the wick.

"Dead, not yet!" he said. "Later, it may be—it may be not. But for the present paralyzed—perfectly—his greater nerve centers—for as long a time as we now desire. Later—tomorrow, it may be, he will merely be found here by our enemies, still alive, to his misfortune. For he is very strong."

As he said this, he gathered up the two

pistols from the mess of samovar and china and tablecloth upon the floor, and passed around the old stained oval table and looked over, apparently, the hulk of the man upon the floor—hidden from me beyond and underneath the table.

In a minute or two, he stood up from where he stooped, dusting his hands.

"We learn this," he said, looking toward Irina, "with other things, from the comrades in India, with whom, after centuries, poisoning becomes a fine art."

He sat down without great hurry in the chair across the table where Mannik had just sat. The light shone on his face, as it had upon the Hungarian's, and it seemed to me in some ways more terrible and cruel—this pock-marked face—than the glossy red one. It grew more so, now. It had changed much in the last few minutes.

"Let us now come down to business—the first part of which is to understand each other," said Nadsky's voice, sharp and firm, where it had been only dull and indifferent before.

THERE was a new gleam in his eye that I liked less than the look in Mannik's. The Hungarian had been like a great hungry animal, with a natural healthy relish for killing. There was something different in the face of the other man, more dangerous: the sharp look of a mind with a fixed and threatening and unhealthy purpose.

"Let us go back," he said to the silent girl, dismissing me entirely. "Let us review. There is now war in the world—as you will know—a still greater war after the greatest war, the greatest festival of murder of the so-called civilization of the past—of the capitalists, and their men of iron."

His voice was strained and high; I liked less and less that glitter in his eyes.

"Let us understand each other," he went on in a lower, harsher voice, "well, entirely, so that there will be no doubt from the beginning. We come now to a high peak, to a turning point in the life of the race—the crisis of a struggle to which Marathon and Tours and Gettysburg were mere children's games—to where now today in Russia, their last stand, the men of flesh fight ringed about by their enemies, the masters of the men of iron. As you will know," he said to Irina.

It meant nothing to me, all this crazy talk, beyond the sharpening sound in his voice, and the growing glitter in his eyes. But looking now at Irina's face, I saw that there was some sense to her in his jargon.

"A state of siege, of freezing and starvation—for millions, men, women, children. Starvation for what? For food? Yes—to some extent. But in part only. For does not Russia send out food from one part, while another starves? No, it is not for that they starve—are being starved. It is for something far deeper still—as you know," he said again to Irina.

He stopped—looked at her—went on. "What is he like—who is it?" I thought, cudgeling my brain. "That sound in his voice? That glitter in his eyes?"

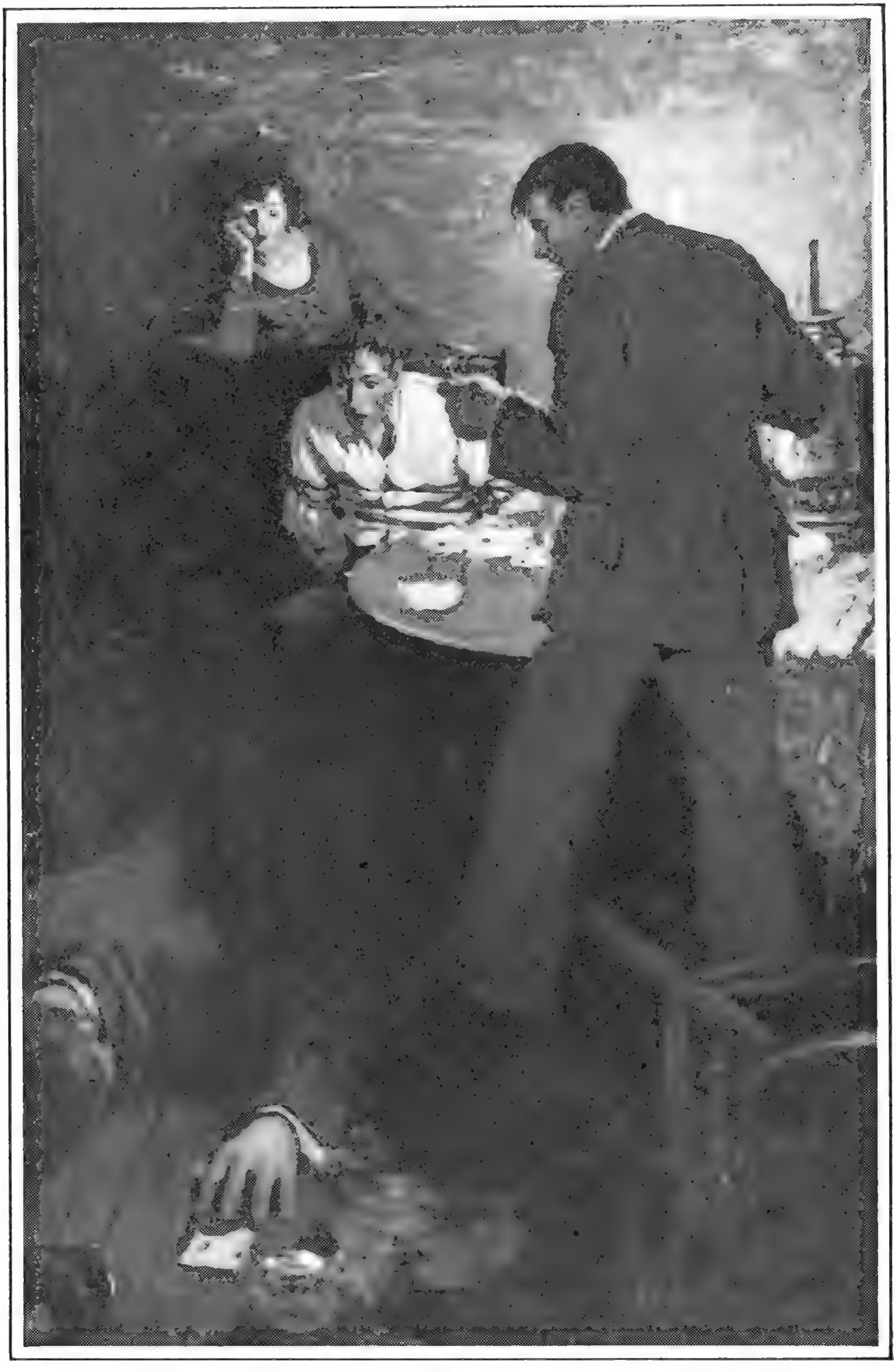
"As you will know," he said to her. "It is the same—always the same—the thing seizing which they have made slaves of mankind; they have fed them living to their iron men, the inhabitants of their factories and their rails! They have made the maddest, cruelest, most degraded century of human history—and called it what? The Age of Coal!"

He stopped again, and I watched him, puzzled by his crazy talk of men of flesh and iron—but still more puzzled by himself. Who was it he was like? I wondered still, hearing him go on.

"And now we come here to this greatest and most accursed land of capitalists and their slaves—in hope to start here also man's fight for freedom. We do little; accomplish nothing that we hoped; we are driven by the damned masters of a damned and lost country. But yet we hope to take with us one great thing, the thing for which Russia starves. That the world of flesh and blood must have for Russia—if this world will be free!"

He stopped once more. And suddenly it came to me who he was like. It was that stranger from the city—that man with thin gray beard and matted hair that settled in that old shanty on the inner beach, and used to stand and yell hell-fire and religion to the sailboats going by, and who finally ended up by killing his two little tow-headed youngsters, for fear they would grow up and be damned when the town threatened to step in and take them from him.

"We would take back with us," he was going on, "the invention of your father, the



The Russian took his time about answering. "Dead, not yet!" he said. "Later, it may be—it may be not. But for the present paralyzed."

Formula of Power, by which Russia—mankind—could be saved. Giving to Russia—now when she must have it—in her extremity—the chance to make power from what she has—for her railroads and her factories—from wood or coal—simply, cheaply, at once."

He spread his arms; his shadow gestured with him, on the wall.

"Your father then deceives us," he said, in a lower, faster voice—running everything together. "Becomes a traitor to us—to Russia, the Zetka, the cause of man against the machine. He flees here; dies by the hand of this other traitor—beside me now, dying or soon to die. We of the Zetka flee the country—followed by the damned police of this ten-thousand-times-damned government. We stop—for tonight only—fleeing! I alone dare to come to shore. And by tomorrow, by middle morning—they will be gone—with me or without me—for fear the ship will be found and recognized by our always following enemies—who now here tonight stand around us, waiting to come in here in the morning—yet so far unconscious that we know that they are there!"

He stopped, lowering his voice; looked into her eyes—exactly in the style of an old-fashioned religious ranter, talking for the saving of the world, in an old-time revival. He was the same thing, I began to understand, only in another style—with a different devil—and a different god.

"SO YOU will give it to me," he said, slowly and seriously—his glittering eyes on hers. "You will give up to me at once that for which I come—the Formula of Power. For you will know that you must. For now that my fingers are almost on it, this one great world necessity that I must have," he asked Irina, talking louder now, "do you think that I shall not reach out and take it?" And he shot out a quick right hand.

Behind him, his shadow from the lamp, squat and broken on the wall, leaped with him like a clutching spider. His eyes glittered into Irina's, across the table.

"You do not think," he asked again, quietly now, "that I will not have this Formula from you now—at no matter how great cruelty?"

He stopped now finally. The thick spider's shadow on the wall sat still, listening. Far off outside, the voice of the old channel buoy grunted in his silence.

"No," said Irina, quietly—after a minute or so. "I know there is no cruelty too great for you to use."

Her face, turned only partly toward me, looked white and drawn in the lamplight; her voice seemed calm, but level—weary.

"Then you will give it to me?" asked Nadsky—and his spiderish shadow stood even more still—seemed to stiffen on the wall, waiting.

"I will, perhaps," the tired voice of Irina came back. "But with one condition!"

"What condition?" asked Nadsky—and waited for her answer.

Grunt . . . grunt . . . grunt, went the voice of Old Man's Misery in his waiting—a good two miles off at least; but plain now as a speaker in the next room—sounding louder and nearer every moment. It was rolling wild, out there. Listening, I could see it as it called, tipping and plunging in that rising sea, that the always stronger east wind was now kicking up.

"For me," Irina Vonstrom was saying in that level voice, "what difference? I have fled you—and your murderers—your cursed Zetka, society of madmen, in vain. My father is dead. I am alone. I have no place on earth to go. I am captured now by you. And you will no doubt do many bestialities to me—in revenge—all for the good and glory of mankind. But I am through. I will surrender—do as you wish about my father's secret—with not strength left to oppose you now."

The lonesome distant hoarseness of the buoy filled the room, as she stopped again.

"But," she went on—and her voice was higher, stronger now—"there is one condition that I make and will insist on. This gentleman," she said, and looked at me, "has no part in this, our struggle. Twice now he has saved my life—at the hazard of his own. I will tell you what you wish, freely, truly. But only if this gentleman will be left free, before I shall have done so. Otherwise you hear nothing. And not all your poison or your Cossacks' Caps, or your other cruelties gathered in from Asia or Africa or the South Sea savages for the betterment of men, can draw what you desire from my lips."

"How could that be?" Nadsky asked her.

She stared at him.

"How could I let him go—and still protect myself—and all the rest—from his reporting of what he now knows—of what we are—of where we now go—to those who follow us?"

"Then I shall not tell—one word."

"Then you will be made to," said the Russian—his eyes gleaming like a snake's in his pitted face.

Grunt . . . grunt . . . grunt, came the voice from outside, in their silence—shouting faster and louder every minute now. And now I spoke up—understanding, as they could not, what that voice from the sea meant—for all of us.

"I will do better than that," I said to that wild man. "I will help you every way I can—to find what you are after. And I will leave it to your judgment afterward—whether, at the end, you will let me go."

"No. No!" cried Irina Vonstrom, turning toward me. "You do not know him. I will never tell him—on such conditions. Never!"

I stared back at her—deep into her eyes. And then I looked away from her to the crazy Russian.

"More than that," I said, holding my eyes on his. "If you will leave us two alone together—for three minutes—I will convince her also. You need not lose sight of us," I said to him. "Just step out through that doorway into the back room—so I can say what I wish to say to her—to her ears alone."

He went out—stood watching us from the dark of the other room, and Irina, supporting herself, moved toward me, and leaned over me, where I was tied.

"CAN you keep him two hours," I whispered, "before he finds it?"

"He could scarcely find it sooner," she whispered back.

"Tell him all, then—everything!" I said. "It will save both you and me."

She drew back and looked into my eyes. "You are telling me the truth?" she asked.

"You hear that?" I asked, looking back, and stopped while she heard the hoot of Old Man's Misery—sounding oftener and louder still. "That means that even now he would have a long chance to go from here. In two hours' time, it will be impossible. He will be cooped in here—captured. So why take any chance of death or violence or torture? Tell him. Tell him everything he asks."

"You know this?" she asked, still watching, anxious.

"As certain as the voice of God," I said, "calling out there in the dark!"

The culmination of the treasure hunt was at hand, and we at last had a chance to outwit this super-fanatic, of which I will tell in September Everybody's (out August 15).

Argosies

By Theda Kenyon

I WONDER if, across the seas,
My light-winged thoughts to you have sailed—
Bearing their gleaming argosies
Of dreams and hopes and memories.
Or have my bright armadas failed,
And foundered on some unguessed reef?
Will they at last return to me—
Small, crumpled dreams, tear-washed by grief,
Ruined hopes, to crush my frail belief
And—saddest—outraged memory?

I think—should they return to me—
No more I'd send them out to sea.

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1924

Passion Fruit

A Grim Chapter from the South Seas. Carstairs Loves and Forgets, but the Girl—Never

By H. De Vere Stacpoole

MILES and miles of coral reef, foam-dashed, and flown about by gulls—beyond the reef the hills and highlands of Paradise engraved on a sky of azure; a tall white lighthouse like a ghost in the smoky blue of the sea.

That is New Caledonia as you see it coming up from Sydney or Brisbane, and the lighthouse marks the entry to the harbor of Noumea.

For long years France exported to this Paradise all the evil passions of man done up in the form of convicts; and though the exportation has stopped, though the only prisoners now are those left over from the old régime and the *libérés* who may not return to France, the passions remain.

Some of the descendants of the old deportees are good citizens, some are not. Monsieur Roche, who kept and maybe still keeps a restaurant in the Rue Marengo, which opens off Coconut Square, was quite open with me on this point. His father, so he told me, had been exported unjustly. He had been a clock-maker and had made the clockwork that worked a bomb that blew up a deputy, or something of that sort —it was all a matter of politics; his father would not have hurt a fly in the ordinary way of life, whereas Chauvin, the keeper of an opposition restaurant round the corner, *his* father had been an assassin. "Yes, monsieur, a brigand, and 'tis easy to see how the blood has come out in the son."

Monsieur Roche knew everything about everybody in Noumea.

He told me some strange stories and one of the strangest had to do with a woman; one of the strangest-looking women I have ever seen.

A half-breed of extraordinary but faded beauty, gay as a wasp in yellow and black striped foulard, but with something about her that would have repelled the mind, even if her beauty had been as fresh as the dew on the tamarisk blossoms.

She was mad.

As she passed the café door where we were talking she glanced at Monsieur Roche. laughed and went on.

"That is Marianne Ribot," said the old fellow, craning his neck to look after her, "daughter of Jacques Ribot, who came here a great many years ago, served his sentence and settled down, marrying a Malay woman. He sold tobacco in the Rue Austerlitz; he had two daughters by the woman: Marianne, whom you have seen, and Cerise. Twins and like as two cherries. They were beauties. There is a curious thing about races, if you have ever noticed it, monsieur. To a Frenchman or an Englishman two, shall we say, Japanese women will look pretty much alike; but if there exists a real likeness between two eastern women, even though it is not very strong to their fellows, a Westerner will be unable to distinguish between them; he will be unable to distinguish the little differences that count so much. It was so with the Ribot girls. Would Monsieur like to hear their story?"

This is the story in my own words.

SOME fifteen years ago the *Hawk*, a seven-hundred-ton brig, came into the harbor of Noumea with a general cargo from Brisbane; the second officer was a young fellow named Carstairs, an exceedingly good-looking individual with a taking manner and a way with him where women were concerned.

Monsieur Roche, who was a philosopher, or at least a restaurant keeper who had always kept his eyes open, gave it as his opinion that it were better for a man to be born ugly than very good-looking, and a boor than a fascinator; better for himself and for others. However that may be, Carstairs, on account of his superficial qualities, made many friends among the town people, and the cargo of the *Hawk*, being French government stores and discharged by convict labor, he had plenty of time on his hands. He did no harm; he neither drank nor gambled, and his main amusements seem to have been fishing, excursions into the country, dining at cheap restaurants and drinking grenadines with fat Frenchmen on Coconut Square of an evening while the convict band discoursed sweet music beneath the flame trees.

Then one day, wanting a packet of cigarettes, he turned into the Maison Ribot.

Ribot had died the year before and the two girls carried on the shop. They were excellent business women, despite their youth and beauty, and they sold other things besides cigarettes: colored syrups, pipes, tobacco pouches, postage stamps, books and native baskets made of palm leaves. Their only help was an old woman, Marie Rimbaut, who lived like a licossa in the darkness of the back premises, helping at times in the shop.

The woman was of that terrible type whose central nervous system would seem to be compounded of the end organs of observatory nerves and little more. She was a spy serving no master but Inquisitiveness, a creature with one interest, the doings of others and more especially of the Ribot sisters; a recording instrument; what she did not see she heard, what she did not hear she guessed. If a ferret were trained for the purpose there is not a village where it would not dig you out at least one specimen of this tribe more or less perfect. Marie Rimbaut was perfect; she saw and recorded the whole of the Ribot story without putting out a hand to warn the protagonists, content to watch till the first snip of the scissors of Atropos.

Carstairs turned into the little shop to buy his cigarettes, found Marianne behind the counter and remained half an hour.

It was a case of love at first sight. The old woman in the back part of the shop saw and heard everything. Cerise was lying down or attending to household matters, for the two girls took it in turn to attend at the counter. It was the time of the day when customers are few, so there was little interruption and the young people had it all to themselves; but the listener heard nothing that might not have been said in the presence of a crowd. Toward the end of it Cerise appeared; she did not come forward but stood in the half-darkness amid the boxes and hanging baskets, watching and listening. From where she stood Carstairs was plainly visible with the light full upon him and Marianne in profile, her face upturned, laughing, and lit with a new interest.

CERISE did not notice the old woman seated knitting in the half-dark, or noticed her only as she might have noticed the hanging baskets and piles of cardboard boxes; she seemed fascinated by what she saw, and stood, her lips apart, smiling at the animation of her sister and her evident interest in the handsome stranger. Marianne was flirting!

Marianne of all people in the world! For, of the sisters, Marianne was the staid one.

"I will see you again," said Carstairs, taking his leave.

"When you please," replied Marianne, and off he went, while in came a soldier from the garrison for tobacco.

When he was gone Cerise came forward; it was her hour for taking on duty. There was a ledge behind the counter which was used as a seat when business was slack; and taking her seat on the ledge, Cerise produced from her pocket a small piece of embroidery work. She did not notice a yellow packet of cigarettes on the counter; her mind was engaged otherwise. Then suddenly she rose. A customer had entered; it was Carstairs.

Carstairs returned for his cigarettes, which he had paid for but forgotten to take away. Fancying that he was still talking to Marianne, he explained, laughing; she handed him the cigarettes, their fingers touched and then, suddenly, the laughter still on his lips, he kissed her. Kissed her full on the lips like an adept and yet like a light-hearted boy. A woman returns a kiss by taking it. The butterfly something in her soul had suddenly fluttered up; without thought, in the fraction of a second, she had consented—not resisted—and there you are. He went out with his cigarettes, with a laugh that seemed part of the whole light business, and Cerise, taking her seat again on the ledge, rested her hands in her lap. No one had seen. There was only Mother Rimbaut and she was half blind and bound up in her knitting; besides, even if she had possessed the eyes of a hawk, she was not in the proper line of vision; then, too, she was deaf—what did it matter?

The shop was empty, Carstairs was gone, but the kiss . . .

It was her first kiss and it clung, and a warmth that was warmer than her southern blood stole from it through her veins and to her heart. It was as though he had kissed her heart.

A burly prison warden in white with a huge revolver at his hip came in for tobacco, and she found herself thinking, "Good heavens, that thing is a man!" She was contrasting him with Carstairs. She had talked of men, talked of marriage, talked of love with Marianne or her girl friends just as she had talked of the price of salt fish or Norfolk Island strawberries or the latest fashion from Paris as exhibited by the garrison officers' wives; but she had talked without knowing, almost without thinking. Her butterfly mind had flitted above these vast subjects as a butterfly flits sentient yet unthinking above a field of corn. It had suddenly come to rest—that which a moment before had been all wings suddenly becoming all eyes; come to rest swaying on the wind that moved the corn-stalk, astonished by the vision that had come so close, seeing everything but the poppies that nature so carefully hides amid the corn.

As she sat, her hands folded and her eyes fixed on the shop door as though she were wondering what else might come through it, the silence of the shop was broken by a faint clicking sound, the clicking of the old woman's needles as she worked, forever busy like a spider in the dark; and now through the mind of the girl, as she sat with her eyes on the door, came half harlequin, half demon, stealing and hirpling, limping and laughing and turning somersaults, the strangest thought.

He didn't kiss you, he kissed Marianne. He had mistaken her for Marianne; the warmth about her heart belonged to Marianne; the new outlook which had come to her was Marianne's.

In a moment he had managed to put the spell on her, made of himself so to speak a window through which she saw a new world; and the window was Marianne's, and the new world—by rights, if there are any rights in a matter of that sort.

She laughed as she thought over this matter. The thing was not yet serious with her; the handsome man whom she had admired while he talked to her sister, the man who had kissed her in mistake for her sister, was still a figure at a distance; he had not made himself yet a part of her life. That was to come.

IT CAME with the rapidity which marks the processes of life and death in the warm lands, those terrible *pays chauds* where a woman is old at twenty-five, a passion full blown in an hour, a corpse corrupt in a day.

Every day Carstairs made his call at the shop. Being in love, he smoked many cigarettes; he called at the same hour and Marianne was there to receive him.

But there were two watchers now. After the fashion of his kind he did not push matters, knowing by instinct exactly the sort of girl he had to deal with. No one could have been more respectful than Carstairs, and at the end of a week when he told Marianne of his love for her he proposed marriage. Though a mate of a ship he had money of his own, not much but enough for him to engage in some business in the island; they would get married when he had made all his arrangements.

She consented but meanwhile, as the engagement was of such a nebulous nature and until the matter was absolutely fixed, she refused his invitations to walk with him of an evening when the band was playing in the square or along those country roads when the moonlight casts the shadows of the palms and makes fairyland of the groves.

Cerise heard it all.

Never in her life before had she spied on any one, or possessed a secret unshared by Marianne; her passion for Carstairs, which had developed *pari passu* with the progress of Marianne's love affair, had changed her nature as it had changed her outlook on life.

She hungered for him, and to feel his lips again on hers she would have parted with her soul.

Something of Ribot, her convict father, was perhaps awakened in her just as something of the same parent was perhaps dormant in the demure Marianne, and meanwhile Carstairs, a straight man in everything but love, in which he was a villain, saw the day of the *Hawk's* sailing approach and Marianne as far off as ever.

He had no money to start a business in New Caledonia; he had no intention of marrying; he had lied throughout and all he had got for his trouble was disappointment, dalliance and the feeling that he had been cheated. For, to a man of his type, love is a game against love where any sort of bluff is permissible and woman is a counter to be played for, cashed and forgotten.

But in Marianne he had come on a woman who refused to be a counter though her passion for him was as real as the passion of Cerise. He might as well have tried to play with the statue of Joan of Arc which stands in front of Noumea's Cathedral.

Marianne was hopeless, so he thought, till the afternoon of the day before the *Hawk's* departure, when coming along the Rue Austerlitz he met an old woman who put a little note in his hand.

"Do not come to the shop today, but meet me this evening—sunset—on the road of the palms." That was all.

Carstairs with the note in his pocket went on his way to complete his preparations and half an hour before sunset he started for the road of the palms through an evening sultry and perfumed with cassia and the flowers of the gardens by the way.

NEXT day he did not come to the shop, nor the next. He had told Marianne the name of his ship because in a small port like Noumea to have told a lie might have meant being found out; but he had also told her that it would not leave for some months as it would have to wait for repairs. In the meantime money for which he had cabled to England would arrive and they could get married and the ship get another second mate. So sure was Marianne in her faith that it was not till the third day of his absence that she made inquiries and found the *Hawk* gone. Mother Rimbaut sent down among the people of the quayside and obtained details. Carstairs had sailed with the *Hawk;* no accident had happened to him; he was not sick; he had left no debts behind him and no enemies.

Marianne found herself face to face with an utterly inexplicable problem. Why had this man left her suddenly and without a word of good-by?

Cerise was facing the same problem but in her case she could say nothing and open her mind to no one, not even Mother Rimbaut—who yet knew everything.

Then Marianne remembered what he had said about the ship being under repair, and making inquiries through the old woman she discovered that the *Hawk* had never been in dock, that there had been nothing wrong with her, and that Carstairs was a liar.

The revelation was complete and sudden as the unveiling of a statue, the unmasking of a battery, the view of a landscape by a lightning flash; but it did not tell her why this man had fooled her, simply because she could not yet understand the man.

She was innocent enough to ask herself, "Why did he say he loved me, why did he ask me to marry him, and why, all that time, was he telling me lies?" She could not understand that all that time he was making plans to betray her, plans foiled by her own common sense in refusing his offers of amusement, evenings in the public square, walks beneath the palm trees and remaining firm behind her counter in the commonplace atmosphere of the tobacco shop.

So things went on for two months or more, her anger against Carstairs deepening and spreading like fire in tinder. Then one day came a new revelation.

One day returning from the market she found Cerise gone.

She had left behind her a letter confessing everything. Her love for Carstairs, the fact that he had betrayed her, and the fact that she had betrayed Marianne—by making an appointment with him to meet him on the road of the palms that fatal evening before he left. Marianne remembered how late it was that night before Cerise returned, saying she had been with friends; and she had believed the story because Cerise never lied.

The letter went on to say much more: how he had kissed her by mistake on that first day of their meeting; how she had grown to love him and fight against her passion for the sake of Marianne; and how, just for one kiss more, she had asked him to meet her in the name of Marianne, knowing that in the dark, in the moonlight, he would not know the difference between them; how he took advantage of the blindness of love to betray her—"as he would have betrayed you," said the letter, which went on to say that all was over and that poor Cerise would be seen no more.

Next day people knew that Cerise Ribot had vanished; the shop was open again and Marianne behind her counter. She would say nothing but that her sister had gone out and had not come back. Search was made without result; bad characters were arrested and interrogated; the wind blew the palms and the foam dashed the coral; time passed, but poor Cerise never returned.

Of all the people in Noumea outside the Maison Ribot, Monsieur Roche alone knew the facts of the matter.

Mother Rimbaut had told him and Roche, though a true man of the world, an innkeeper and the son of a convict, was shocked at the tragedy and that Carstairs, a customer whom he had liked, should have been the villain of the piece. "Perhaps some day he will come back," said Roche.

THE *Hawk* on leaving New Caledonia called at Sydney, and before reaching Sydney and tying up at Circular Wharf Carstairs had almost forgotten the incident at Noumea. A storm they had encountered three days out had helped in the obliteration, and with the soil of New South Wales under his feet the affair would have seemed to him remote as a love affair in Jupiter.

From Sydney the ship went to San Francisco and from San Francisco to Honolulu, at least toward Honolulu, for she was wrecked on that voyage and of all her company only Carstairs and half a dozen others were saved and taken to Chile, where great luck waited for him. One of the saved passengers, a woman very wealthy and with vast interests in the Islands, fell in love with him and married him and died a month after the marriage, leaving him a rich man, but tied. Wealth is not all jam.

Poor and working his way through life, Carstairs had been a happy man; that is to say, a man with perfect health, no worries and without a conscience. Wealth had suddenly developed a host of worries for him.

If you wish for revenge on any man, don't cut his throat, leave him a huge fortune and thus bar him, possibly from the kingdom of heaven, probably from the kingdom of rest. Carstairs on reviewing his possessions found all sorts of things that were wrong. Shares that had depreciated in value and were likely to depreciate more, a lawsuit in the egg over some lands in California, a suit to upset the will, which was frantically absurd, yet irritating; interests everywhere that had to be looked after and papers in legions that had to be signed, including American income-tax papers, the most appalling documents ever devised by the wit of man for man's distraction.

Much will love more; at all events it is ever anxious to keep itself intact, and Carstairs, who had been indifferent to money when he had none, became fretful now over the loss of a few dollars and sleepless over some depreciation that would not have kept an ordinary business man awake. And yet he was free-handed in spending on his own pleasures, though the instinct to protect his fortune from the hands of others developed and forced itself and dominated him with whip and spur. He felt that every man was trying to rob him—as in fact was the case—and not trusting the agent of some property in Queensland he went there to look into things himself. New Caledonia lay on the road to Queensland and on the way back his ship, a schooner belonging to a trading company in which he had an interest, touched at Noumea—because he ordered her to do so. The sight of New Caledonia recalled again the most beautiful girl he had ever seen; recollection of that last evening added fuel to the desire to meet her once again; and there would be no trouble to worry about. Cerise had shown him enough of her real nature on that parting over two years and six months ago to tell him that.

Was she married? Maybe. Was she single? Who could tell? But well he knew that, whether she were married or single, she was his. Why not, if she were still as beautiful as ever, why not keep her as his—her, whom the sharks had eaten over thirty long months ago.

There are women who persist in the memory like perfumes or tunes, and the sweet perfume of Cerise breathed in one ecstatic hour had never quite vanished; the sight of the foam line of New Caledonia, the hills and the ghost-white lighthouse brought it back, revived it. It was almost as though she stood on the deck beside him; and at the cost of three thousand dollars the wheel of the schooner spun, the main boom lashed out to starboard. Altering her course, the ship steered due east for the break.

SHE came into the harbor with a flooding tide and a failing wind, a tremendous sunset lighting the wharves and the town from which faint on the flower- and harbor-scented air came the sound of the band playing in the public square.

Everything looked just the same, from the town and its fortifications to the trees topped by the spires of the cathedral.

But Carstairs found himself forgotten. No one would have recognized in the well dressed man wearing a Panama the mate of the *Hawk*, and he saw nobody that he recognized. The very hotel where he put up was new-built. Having booked his room, he left the place before dining, crossed Coconut Square and entered the Rue Austerlitz.

Ribot's shop stood just as of old, the name over the front and the baskets swinging in the doorway.

He went in, and there behind the counter stood Marianne Ribot just as she had stood on the day when first he saw her.

"Monsieur," said old Roche, "there is no doubt in my mind that she had been expecting him. Some instinct had told her that he would come back; maybe she had willed it—who knows?—but the fact remained that she had a cane knife on a ledge behind the counter. And as he came up to her with a bold smile on his lips and his hand outstretched, she turned as if to pick up some trifle and, turning again, drove the knife into his throat.

"When the police arrived she refused to speak, Monsieur Carstairs was taken to the hospital and she was taken to prison, where a magistrate visited her; but she would only say, 'I have done what I have done'—nothing more.

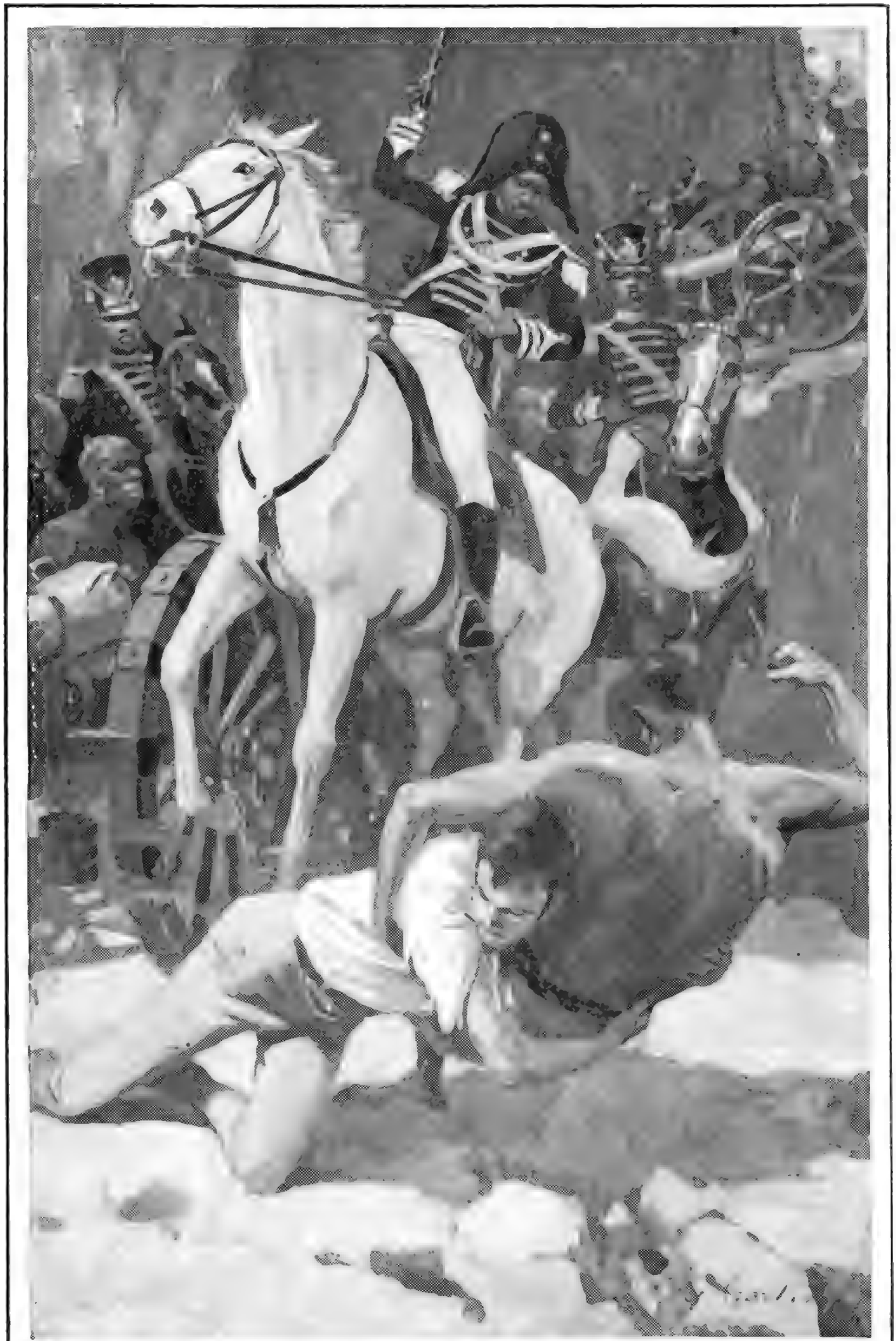
"Mother Rimbaut was examined and she told the magistrate Carstairs had been to the shop years ago and had carried on a flirtation with Marianne; but she said nothing about Cerise—she had never said anything about that matter to any one but me. Months passed and the wounded man lay in hospital half in and half out of death's door. He had plenty of time to think of his sins and there is no doubt but that he repented of them, for he made a full confession, saying he had wronged her and that he deserved what she had done to him.

"At the trial she would say neither yes nor no. Nothing but 'I have done what I have done.' She seemed indifferent to everything and after six months' imprisonment she went back to her shop just as you see her today, not mad, yet not sane. As for Carstairs, he left the island and we have heard no more of him.

"But to me the interest of the whole business lies in the question: did she stab that man to revenge Cerise or herself? And also in the thought that Monsieur Carstairs, who was responsible for the death of Cerise, had, to his own knowledge, never even seen the girl. He had heard Marianne speak of her sister, but as they were never in the shop together he did not know of the extraordinary likeness.

"To this day, if he is alive, Monsieur Carstairs does not know that he is responsible for a woman's death. He will not know till the judgment comes; and that is a thought to give one pause, for does any man know his full account or the consequences of his sins?"

Later that day, toward evening, finding myself in the Rue Austerlitz I went into the Maison Ribot out of curiosity and to buy a packet of cigarettes. Marianne was behind the counter looking just the same as when I had seen her passing Roche's restaurant, but sane enough in her business methods and making not a centime's mistake in the change. As she handed me my cigarettes with the indifference of an automatic figure and with scarcely a glance, the commonplace things of that little shop seemed of more tragic importance than the girl, and the commonplace sounds; the voices of the passers-by in the street, the laughter of a child, the click of knitting needles from the gloom behind the piled baskets, a sound microscopic and intermittent as the ticking of a death-watch beetle or the crawling of a snail on the pane.



With maddened strength the negro struggled to tear himself from the binding arms of the white man. A pistol thundered in his ears; acrid smoke smothered him.

From Prisoner to Royal Favorite

THE CITADEL

Life and Love and Death Play Hide-and-Seek with Captain Bush in the Old Negro Kingdom of Haiti

By Joseph Husband

Illustration by C. G. Gaul

Begin this serial with any instalment. The story up to this point is here.

IT REQUIRED all of John Bush's native buoyancy to surmount in spirit the predicament in which he found himself. Failure was something which he never admitted, but even the most optimistic consideration of his present plight left little room for hope.

A month ago he was Captain Bush of the *Lucy*, out of Philadelphia; since then he had lost his brig in an engagement with a British corvette; two days later by a clever ruse he, with the survivors of his crew, thirteen men in all, had from the longboat boarded and seized the *Hercules*, a British vessel also trading in West Indian waters. After starting the erstwhile officers and crew of the *Hercules* off for Tortuga in well-provisioned boats, Captain Bush had headed his vessel back to Le Cap Française in French Haitian Santo Domingo, which he had lately left.

For ten years he had followed the sea. At fifteen he had quarreled with his Quaker father because of a boyish prank, and had gone into his uncle's shipping business. He showed a great aptitude for the things of the sea and at twenty-five he was captain and part owner of the brig *Lucy*. His was one of the few American vessels that had continued trading in West Indian waters during the war with England.

The adventures of his ten years at sea in all parts of the globe, full of color and movement though they had been, were pallid by comparison with the events of the last month. For never before had his adventures been complicated by love.

Virginie Goutier had been in all his dreams for two years, ever since his last visit to Le Cap, but not until he had seen her a month ago had he dared to hope that she would ever come to love him.

From Monsieur Samatan, a rich negro and a firm friend of the young captain's in spite of the feeling which existed in Santo Domingo against all whites, he had learned that Virginie's guardian had promised her in marriage to Pierre Nicholas, a man of color and a captain in the army of King Henri Christophe, the black despot of Haiti, worthy successor in ruthlessness and bloodshed to Dessalines.

Leroy Mangan had somehow escaped the wrath and destruction that had wiped out almost all the French inhabitants of Santo Domingo at the time of the negro uprising. A marriage between his ward and one of Christophe's favorites would of course solidify his position.

Had John Bush been more the Quaker and less the lover he might have succeeded in getting Virginie on board the *Hercules*. He had arranged with Thomas Huggett, his mate and friend, to have all in readiness to weigh anchor at any hour, and at the landing stage his faithful black servant, Luke, was waiting with the small boat. But, hasty of temper and ready of fist as he was, he had fought with Pierre Nicholas and with Leroy Mangan; Mangan lay now in his massive bed, swathed in bandages, as a result of the encounter, and Captain Nicholas had intercepted his flight with Virginie and given orders for his arrest and execution.

The intervention of Monsieur Samatan had saved his life. Napoleon Samatan was a power in Christophe's kingdom. He was no dabbler in politics, but a financier to whom the leading men of the island, from Christophe down, were indebted. Hence his friendship was a thing above price in this country where human life was so cheap.

From Nicholas, deeply in debt, he had exacted a reprieve of the death sentence of Captain Bush. That he did not ask his release was a puzzle to the captain. But Monsieur Samatan had suggested that Captain Bush be sent with other prisoners to work on the citadel—that vast fortress which Christophe had built on a peak a day's journey across the plain from Le Cap to insure his supremacy against Pétion in the south, who was a constant menace.

And here he was—the one white man in the band of black prisoners en route from Le Cap to the citadel.

IT WAS night when they started out along the broad white road that led south from Le Cap Française to the mountains. On the left, the harbor lay smooth and black in the starlight. Salt marshes were on the right, dark blotches of low vegetation broken here and there by expanses of saline soil that glittered like snow. Far ahead under the pale blue night sky the long wall of the mountain stood as though offering an impassable barrier to the people of the plain, a towering frontier behind which despots might find security from all the world. White lay the road, a long wide band of whiteness, curving slightly from the harbor. The dust was thick and soft and irritating. Here and there great flags of cut stone indicated that the way had once been smoothly paved. Now it was rutted and broken, another tragic memory of a departed civilization.

A dozen soldiers marched with the prisoners and in the rear followed an officer on horseback. Without order they marched, a black cluster of human beings stumbling forward in the starlight. No particular attention was paid to the prisoners by their guards; the shackled wrists made escape impossible.

And in this strange company John Bush found himself, each mile that passed putting him that much farther from the house of Leroy Mangan and the girl who at that moment was watching with tired, wistful eyes the same stars which illumined the road to the citadel.

She was sitting in the garden, on the same seat where, another night which now seemed long ago, she had sat with the young Philadelphia captain and had first heard from his lips words of love.

Within half an hour she would hear the sound of Nicholas's horse on the drive. Then he would stand in the doorway and call to her. For the first time in her life she desired his presence, for tonight he would bring news of the man who alone filled her heart; the man who at this very minute was stumbling along the ruined road in the starlight to the slavery of the citadel.

Then like an echo to her thought, she heard the beat of a horse's hoofs, and a few minutes later Pierre Nicholas called her name.

She answered, "*Oui, monsieur,*" in words scarcely above a whisper, but he heard them and came down the low, broad steps, his spurs jingling on the stones. Then she felt him sit down beside her . . . That was where John had sat; that he should sit there in the place of her lover filled her with a flare of anger. She got up quickly and with her back turned to Nicholas gazed blindly into the opacity of the shadows.

"I have kept my part of the agreement, Virginie." His voice was smooth and placating.

"He lives?" she questioned.

"He lives!"

"Is that all you have to tell me?" she cried.

"That he lives, mademoiselle—is not that enough? But I shall tell you more. Already he sails on his way to the Mole and from there he will by some ship reach America without difficulty." He paused, but the girl made no sound; and he continued, evidently satisfied that she was accepting his story. "I wish you could have seen his gratitude, mademoiselle: it was touching.

That bravado of the American was gone absolutely. The fear of death was in his face. He could not start quickly enough, I assure you."

She turned and faced him. "Pierre Nicholas, I do not believe this. Too often in little things have I known you to forget the truth, to believe now this incredible story. If John Bush lives—and that I doubt—he has never left Le Cap in any manner such as you describe. What proof do you bring me that he lives?"

With scorn she watched the heavy lips struggle for an answer. In the starlight his face seemed very white, a bloodless mask.

"John Bush lives, I swear it. But for the last time you have seen him. That I have preserved his life is sufficient. Now you must keep your part of the bargain." He spoke slowly and with a tinge of anger.

"Bah!" Virginie tapped the stone with the tip of her slipper. "I do not believe you. Bring me proof that he lives. Your word means nothing to me."

As though to strike her, Nicholas sprang from the seat, but the girl stood motionless, her impenetrable eyes steadily fixed on his.

"So!" His voice was thick and the words came like a snarl. "This is a woman's trick! A proof! You but seize on this to crawl from your promise. But I, too, little one, can play the same game. A week? A week from tonight? *Oui?* Perhaps the time is too long for you to wait. If you would delay, I would hasten."

He turned and took a step toward the house. "I go to talk with Monsieur Mangan. In my absence, mademoiselle, remember my words. It is not well to cross too far the will of Pierre Nicholas."

MOTIONLESS as a statue, Virginie stood until he was gone; then she flung herself on the bench, her face buried in her hands. Was John Bush alive? The horror of the uncertainty numbed her brain. The story of the sailing vessel and his gratitude for the opportunity to escape was incredible. But if he had not left the island, where could he be concealed? There were dungeons in the foundation of Fort Picolet where he might be put away to linger and to die. That was more likely. But what reason was there for her to believe that Bush was alive? Surely, for the purposes of Nicholas, it were better that he were dead; Leroy Mangan, she knew, would have no compunction.

There was a faint crunch of gravel on the path. She peered into the inky shadow. That was a footfall—there could be no mistake in the sound—but no servants used that path. Who could be spying upon her at this time and place?

"Who is there?" she called in a low, firm voice.

There was no answer, but from the blackness a man came into the starlight, silently as a moving shadow. There was not even a perceptible sound of his feet on the stones of the path. She retreated a step with a little startled intake of her breath. Then she recognized him. It was the man who had come to her that same morning. She pointed to the house where the open doors glowed with the bright yellow light of candles and raised a cautioning finger to her lips. The man retreated a few steps into the shadow and she followed, her white dress marking her.

With an imperative gesture he held out a great black hand and she saw a bit of white caught between the fingers. She took it, wondering. It was a small square of paper folded many times. In the light of the doorway it would be possible to read what the message contained; she hurried across the court and up the low, broad steps to the door. Guardedly, she unfolded the paper. The note was in French and it was signed "A Friend."

> One who dares not openly assist begs you to believe that effort will be made to secure the freedom of our mutual friend, who is safe but in captivity.

Once again Virginie read the brief message; then she thrust the paper in her bosom and walked with affected slowness back to the place where she had received it. There was no one there. As mysteriously as the messenger had come, so silently had he disappeared.

Then Nicholas had not wholly lied to her! John Bush was alive and a prisoner somewhere. The realization made her feel weak. The suspense was temporarily broken. For a little while, if only for a few hours, she could rest.

To any one familiar with the well-kept books of Monsieur Samatan the writing of the note which Luke had thrust into Virginie's hand would have been easily recognizable. Shortly after sunrise he had been awakened from his sleep by a low and persistent tapping on the door of his house. From a window unseen he had carefully examined this early caller and had recognized in the huge black the personal servant of John Bush, a negro on whose faithfulness and integrity the captain had often commented. Slinging a linen gown about him, he let Luke into the house, and in pantomime the mute endeavored to narrate the story of Captain Bush's capture and imprisonment. It was this information that had led Monsieur Samatan to confirm what he had conjectured, and later to call in person on the unhappy Philadelphian in his cell in Fort Picolet.

There was much of the white man in the character of Monsieur Samatan. How far back had occurred the infusion of white which lightened his blood, no one knew or bothered to calculate. A planter of the nobility, the owner of one of the great estates that had once made a garden of the plain of Le Cap, had owned his grandmother. Probably that was the source of his light color and particularly of the sharp, active brain beneath the close-cropped head.

Monsieur Samatan was rich. Furthermore, he was lucky. The gray-green scarab of his gold finger ring had come from Egypt, but to the superstitious negroes and men of color the curious beetle possessed an unknown but sinister significance. It was a little thing, this bit of ancient carving, but in former years Dessalines had worn it, and men did not forget that death inevitably followed his accusing finger—always the finger which wore the ring. It was the sign of death. So, without doubt, it was the guardian of the wealth of Monsieur Samatan, perhaps even more powerful than he himself realized. No one had ever beaten him at a bargain, and never had he lacked the means to finance any transaction which promised profit. He was hard and cold and yet he had a weakness; there was in the world one man whose friendship he valued above all things. And that man was John Bush.

So it was with an interest more than casual that Monsieur Samatan uncovered the details of the misfortune into which the precipitate Quaker had projected himself. Monsieur Samatan was rich and his wealth was safely secured; he had powerful friends among foreigners and on his hand he wore a ring of very particular significance. All these things carried weight not alone with his fellow citizens of Le Cap but with the leaders and even with the all-powerful Christophe. He recognized these things; they were factors valuable to him, but he was too sharp a trader to play his cards carelessly, too often, or for a stake too small.

WHEN Monsieur Samatan left the fort he hurried to the Hôtel de la République, and there in a far corner, a glass of wine at his elbow, was the man he sought, Pierre Nicholas. The meeting was cordial, and after a second glass of fine Bordeaux, Monsieur Samatan stated his desire. It was that Nicholas should intervene and secure the life of Captain Bush. The request was based on a statement eloquently expounded of the friendship existing between himself and the Philadelphian. Humbly Monsieur Samatan implored the intercession of the friend of the king. No mention was made of a sum of gold long since borrowed by Nicholas from the thrifty merchant, or of the interest now due, and perhaps none too convenient to be met. Nor was the green scarab mentioned, although it was the ring hand with which Monsieur Samatan most frequently lifted his glass.

It was very evident that Pierre Nicholas did not welcome the proposal with pleasure. John Bush, a very irritating thorn in his flesh, had been, or was soon to be, disposed of in a manner that was final and satisfactory. It was annoying to contemplate the possible continued activities of this extremely fearless and foolhardy American.

The name of Virginie was not mentioned. The question of the reprieve of the prisoner revolved entirely on principles of justice and politics. In every instance the argument favored Nicholas. Monsieur Samatan as a loyal citizen could not but admit the impropriety of his own proposal. White men were not wanted; fire and massacre had, not long before, registered the black man's wishes in the matter. L'Ouverture, Dessalines, and now Christophe had fought to break the rule of the foreigner, to conserve Santo Domingo for the negro. And so it seemed highly improper that this white man should be permitted to run wild and unreproved.

Monsieur Samatan hinted at the possible

effect on the United States of the summary execution of an American citizen, but Nicholas smiled with gracious toleration at the jest. So long as England continued at war with the young republic the life of an occasional citizen would never be missed. Monsieur Samatan agreed; and agreeing, he again lifted the ring hand with a health to his companion. It was but a whim, this desire of his that John Bush should live. Perhaps on that ground alone Captain Nicholas would give his aid. But now behind the heavy, pallid face of Nicholas a thought was suggesting interesting possibilities. Sooner or later he must yield to Monsieur Samatan's wishes; the debt necessitated that, the green bug was already unpleasantly affecting him. But if he must yield, why could he not capitalize his magnanimity with Virginie? She need not know that other motives had influenced him. The thought enticed him. He was already eager to be off to the house of Monsieur Mangan to test its effect.

"It is a pleasure," he answered the merchant abruptly, "to be able to render so insignificant a service. I have already given orders that Bush be shot at sunset, but I can easily change the sentence. What would you have done with him?"

Monsieur Samatan thought for a minute. With his left hand he absently moved his glass on the wet table-top, describing a series of moist circles. From the corner of his eye, Nicholas furtively followed the gyrations of the beetle. Sincerely he wished that the interview might terminate.

"They are sending prisoners to work on the citadel, eh?" Monsieur Samatan finally queried.

Nicholas was surprised. He had anticipated that the merchant would propose giving Bush passage on some outgoing vessel, or at the worst a continued imprisonment in Fort Picolet. Prisoners employed at the citadel died off with appalling rapidity; a sentence to that work was not much more than a death sentence deferred.

"It shall be as you suggest," he agreed.

On his return to his house Monsieur Samatan dispatched Luke to carry to Virginie a message of encouragement. The presence of Luke in Le Cap would excite no interest or suspicion. His inability to speak protected him; it would be presumed that he had come in from another part of the island. He explained this to Luke with much gesticulation, and the big black nodded his understanding.

The next step would be more difficult. In the quiet darkness of his house he considered how he would proceed. Then, with a plan half formed, he blew out the candles and went to bed. And while he slept the object of his solicitude stumbled along the rough road that led south from Le Cap toward the citadel.

THE experience of that terrible night was to Bush a stretch of interminable hours punctuated here and there by vivid and unforgettable incidents. Trivial incidents in a sense they were; pictures flashing out of the luminous night, a fire burning back among the banana trees, the liquid booming of drums, a dead man lying across the road, a patch of moonshine on the ruined wall of a sugar mill. Like a continuous stream life flowed down the highway toward Le Cap. The air was resonant, the world seemed filled with life.

They marched slowly, for the guards were showing no desire unduly to exert themselves, but Bush was exhausted before they left the outskirts of the city; his feet were sore and swollen, his whole body ached, his head throbbed with dull, continuous pain. No one spoke. At his side, ahead, and behind, the other prisoners plodded doggedly. Manacles clanked monotonously.

It was midnight when the first halt was made, and the men threw themselves on the dry, hot earth at the roadside, too exhausted even to seek the relative softness of the grass a few yards beyond.

For perhaps two hours they slept, flung limp and lifeless on the ground. Then the prodding gun muzzles awakened them. Groaning and muttering strange vileness, the prisoners got to their feet and found the road. The clanking manacles resumed their monotonous theme.

There was an enervating dampness in the air. Like white clouds the night mist hung over the plain. For long spaces the air would be sharp and clear, then the mist would dim the starlight and the darkness would become chill and tangible.

Dawn was paling the night and the smaller stars were disappearing from the sky when the second halt was called, and again they dropped almost where they stood into a stupor of sleep. When John Bush again became conscious of things, the sun was flaming hot in his upturned face and his body glowed with heat. From panniers at his saddle, the officer had taken a ration of coarse bread, and a large hard cake was doled out to each of the men. They ate, crouched on their haunches, and washed down the dry particles with water from a stagnant pool at the roadside.

THE food and water refreshed Bush and his sleep had relieved the pain behind his temples. With a characteristic revival of interest he looked around him. White and glaring, the road swung by their resting-place, appearing and ending on either hand in the varying green of tropic foliage. Again he studied the mountains. On a sheer peak on the right a white block of stone seemed superimposed on the very summit. Distinct through the clear air he could see it as though through a spy-glass. It was the citadel, that tremendous fortress which under the direction of English engineers was nearing completion for the king, Christophe. A hundred, and in some places two or three hundred, feet, the solid walls of masonry towered against the sky. Black squares in long lines indicated ports for the cannon that Christophe had obtained for its defense. And in the center Bush could see higher towers and parapets uprearing from the mass, a final pinnacle against the sky.

But now the road began to twist on a slightly increasing grade among the low foothills. Slowly the march was resumed; slowly the little band of prisoners and their guards toiled forward. Black faces were white with dust save where rivulets from sweating brows had coursed black gleaming lines. The guards, wearied and irritable, lagged in the rear, occasionally prodding the hindmost prisoner with a bayonet or urging all forward with a curse. A band of officers, courtiers from the palace, passed them, gold-encrusted uniforms sparkling in the sunlight and silver chains and spurs clinking sweetly. The uniforms flared gorgeously against the green, and their black faces seemed very black beneath their brazen helmets. The prisoners crowded to the roadside to let them pass, heads bowed and eyes downcast before this evidence of the power and magnificence of the despotic king.

It was mid-afternoon, and the more frequent huts along the road indicated that they were entering the town of Millot. Now and then Bush caught sight of ruined villas or sugar mills among the trees. High gateposts of finely carved stone marked the entrances. Here in former days the French had cultivated their great estates from these splendid dwellings, slaves by the hundred thousands had tilled the rich soil irrigated with water drawn down from the hills. Sugar, rum, coffee, all the produce of the tropics yielded wealth immeasurable. A third of the income of all of France came from the island soil. Each year the linen of the royal court was carried across the broad Atlantic to be bleached to snowy whiteness in the Santo Domingo sunshine. Here had been life with all the wealth and splendor and indolence and viciousness of the capitals of Europe blended with the golden sunshine. Here had been song and laughter, culture and beauty. And then up through the thin crust of an effete civilization had been thrust a gaunt black hand. Toussaint l'Ouverture had led the revolt and died finally in a prison in far-off France. Then the dikes that held in check the human flood burst open. Fire came with sword; terror by day, and by night horror indescribable. Lust, cruelty and hatred swept before their savage rush the implanted civilization, and the looted villas flamed far into the night. The black hordes reigned. The revolution of the slaves had triumphed.

And so it was that as John Bush tramped doggedly along the broad road in the heavy heat of the late afternoon, his thoughts turned back to those other days of which he had heard so much, and a feeling of sadness oppressed him. The savage history of the years that had intervened since the revolution recurred to him. Again and again the untrained armies of black patriots had risen against French and English invaders. Again and again Le Cap Française had lighted the night skies with the glare of her burning buildings. Napoleon's picked veterans had finally abandoned the vain attempt to subdue an aroused people. Dessalines, following the patriot Toussaint, had become emperor. He was assassinated, and now Christophe ruled, a king. In Port au Prince in the south, Pétion disputed Christophe's title, and a constant war existed.

In the brain of Christophe there was increasing fear of the death which had become so frequent an event in the land he ruled. And so he was now completing an impregnable fortress where, if the need came, he could withstand his enemies.

In the quick twilight John Bush saw the glory of Millot. Wide and grassy the broad central street opened from the winding road. Ahead the mountains cut a dark silhouette against the saffron sky of sunset. From rich gardens came the intense color of the bougainvillea and the flamboyant banana trees drooped giant fronds over ruined walls. There was a stir of life everywhere. Men and women moved incessantly up and down and across the wide way. The air, so still and clear, seemed to reflect the sound of limpid French words, the sweet notes of a song, the jingle of silver-mounted harness. Bright uniforms made spots of vivid color among the white garments of the common people. All was life, and serenity and beauty. But, footsore and weary, the little band of prisoners stumbled along the rutted greensward, unnoticing.

There were cries and a smart tinkling of bells. Four white horses, their shining harness heavily ornamented with silver, came at a fast trot down the street. Behind them, swung on long leather springs, was a French chariot. Outriders in crimson livery mounted the off-horses; on a high seat behind the chariot rode two black footmen, arms folded, also in livery of crimson. And in the soft cushions of the deep seat lolled a woman of perhaps forty years, a dark mulatto, dressed in the elegance of the latest Parisian fashion, the queen of King Henri Christophe.

The prisoners huddled at the roadside while the carriage passed. With curiosity dulled by infinite fatigue, Bush watched it disappear into the soft cloud of dust that rose from the horses' hoofs. More slowly they proceeded again. Their destination now at hand, the guards no longer pressed them forward. Then at the end of the street Bush saw the palace, and in spite of his weariness its unexpected magnificence absorbed his attention. On the left the dome of a low building rose among the palm trees, and beyond the entrance on a high terrace formed by a long level hill was the palace of the king, a tremendous château of French architecture four stories high, surrounded by a garden of indescribable splendor.

Like a man drugged, Bush slept that night on the earthen floor of a thatched building on the outskirts of the town. Sleep came slowly, for although he was now freed of the manacles his wrists ached and his feet and legs were swollen with walking. All about him on the floor lay his companions, black bundles of rags from which now and again a tossing arm swung in sleep in the gleams of moonlight that fell white and clear through crevices in the roof. Through his tired brain past events marched again and again in interminable succession. He felt the swinging deck of the brig beneath his feet; he saw the honest face of Huggett, the shining ebon countenance of Luke, he saw Nicholas' sneering lips and small eyes peering at him; he saw Leroy Mangan, cold and inimical, and then he felt the moist warm lips of Virginie; he felt his arms around her yielding body, and with a tremor he aroused from his half-sleep to see again the moonlight and the tossing forms of the sleeping men.

THE dew was heavy on the grass. Some parrots fled screaming in level flight from a copse of banana trees. The light was clear and mellow with dawning day. Along the worn and rutted road behind the sleeping palace they marched in straggling file, a hundred and more prisoners, black, mulatto and quadroon, and one white man, John Bush. At the roadside were the brickyards where for years had been made the red brick for the citadel. Everywhere were the cabins of the workers and huge barracks where the prisoners were quartered. And among the buildings the white boles of the palm trees reared immaculate to their clustering fronds.

The road wound in and out among ravines and gullies. Streams of sparkling water gurgled down over shallow fords, the broken rivulets glittering in the sunshine. Steadily the road climbed the side of the mountain, and at each turn a new view of the valley was disclosed, a vista of green-clad hills and a great wedge of azure sky between.

They halted on a level stretch. Lashed to massive carriages with solid wooden wheels a half-dozen bronze cannon lined the roadside. With his eyes Bush measured their bulk; their weight was enormous. They were guns of the greatest size from a ship-of-the-line, or perhaps siege guns purchased from the French, guns that had spoken at the bidding of Napoleon before the walls of some invested city.

The prisoners were divided into squads. In and out among them a dozen petty officers of the king, burly blacks in sweat-stained uniforms, bustled officiously. All the soldiers were armed with brass-mounted flintlock pistols and sidearms, and each carried in his hand a lithe whip tipped with a bit of sharp iron. Loud and strangely discordant their vituperative orders rose above the steady purling sound of the stream, and like animals the men dumbly obeyed.

Bush found himself in the middle of a long double line of men harnessed to the traces attached to the foremost guns. There came the sharp order to start. Slowly the black shoulders bent against the inert mass behind. From corded necks strained muscles appeared like twisted rope; beneath the glistening black skin of broad backs the lacing sinews stood out taut, as the resistance of the tremendous weight flexed the struggling bodies.

"*Allons!*" The long whips cracked smartly. On the shoulders of the man before him Bush saw the black skin open beneath the lash into a red gash from which the tiny drops of crimson trickled like sweat.

A negro in stained red trousers tucked into high boots of Spanish leather galloped up and down the line on his horse and screamed invectives at the straining men under whose concerted urge the wooden wheels of the carriage squealed finally into life, and slowly for a dozen yards the gun moved heavily along the road. Then a cross rut intervened and the broad backs doubled in futile effort.

There was the heavy report of a pistol. With a dramatic gesture the soldier lifted the smoking barrel above his head. In the road the leader of the gang writhed for a moment and then stretched stiffly with a convulsive tremor beneath the feet of the man behind him, his temple shattered by the leaden ball.

"Pull!" shouted the negro. "Pull, or I kill the next man, too." He took a second pistol from his belt.

With the terror of death driving them, the long lines of taut bodies leaned against the traces. Once more the greased wheels of the gun carriage protested as they turned. The gun was going forward. The road dipped slightly. A momentum was attained. With a rush they gained the succeeding slope. At the end of each ascent there was a brief rest; then the next incline was taken.

The edge of the road dropped away abruptly in a precipice of two or three hundred feet. Standing near the edge, Bush peered over into the depth. Down beneath the sheer wall of rock was the thatched roof of a native hut; a thread of soft gray smoke rose from it in the sheltered air; there was the sound of voices, clear but very distant.

His eyes wandered to the man who labored at the traces just in front of him, whose back had been so cruelly scarred by the vicious iron-tipped lash. He was crouched on the ground, staring off into the limitless distance through small, dark yellow eyes. He was a negro of powerful build, an enormous man with finely molded limbs, but the head was small and round, and there was an expression of hate in the coarse features of the face. Conscious of the stare of the white man, the black shifted his eyes toward him; there was a malevolent glare in the small eyes, a snarl on the thick, red lips.

BEHIND him and below a bugle cut the stillness with three thin rising notes. In an instant the soldiers were on their feet. The officer on his horse waved his sword wildly about his head in a frenzy of excitement.

"Back," he shouted, riding at the prisoners who had flung themselves along the road when the order to halt had been given. "Back! The king comes."

Whips sang in the air. Wickedly the lithe thongs snicked against human flesh. Before the onset of the guards the men crowded against the cliff, leaving clear between them and the precipice the narrow road.

A mythical being Christophe had always been to the Philadelphian from the day of his first voyage to Le Cap. Throughout the island it was the king whose name recurred most frequently in every conversation. He was a hero, the savior of the country, an invincible and magnificent monarch at whose touch the armies of the great white war-loving nations faded as the mists over the plains melted before the rising sun.

Once a waiter in a tavern in Le Cap, this uneducated black by his inherent genius had become the leading general of his predecessor; and when an assassin had struck down Dessalines it was General Christophe who had become president and later by his own edict king of Santo Domingo.

Bush recalled fleeting fragments of the countless anecdotes he had heard of him. To his subjects the ruthless king was a demigod. With the characteristic tendency of a simple people, his tyrannic power had won for him a mute affection. They boasted of his cruelty, of his bloody revenges, of his mad licentiousness. And yet through all the sequence of anecdotes were occasional instances of rude justice and of rewards justly given for faithful service. By the rule of fear Christophe was king, but there was another side to his nature that infrequently gave itself expression.

Up the incline came the foremost of the king's escort. Their black horses were lathered with sweat; foam clung like froth to their champed bits. Polished brass and silver shone in the sunshine. They were in the ornate uniform of the king's bodyguard; tall, thin-hipped, broad-chested men who rode their horses like centaurs. Eight, Bush counted, riding in a single file. They passed with only a casual glance at the prisoners and a mere recognition to the salute of the self-conscious officer who sat on his horse at a fixed salute, the sweat coursing in shining rivulets down his face.

There was a little space behind the last horseman. Then over the crest came a huge white horse, magnificently caparisoned; and on its back rode a man who, Bush instantly knew. must be the king. He was a full-blooded negro of middle age and of medium height, for his stirrups were drawn high against the crimson saddle-cloth. Lolling easily in his saddle, his massive body swayed with the horse's gait. But it was not the graceless body or the broad face that held Bush's attention, although the face was one that, once seen, was impossible to forget. Beneath a wide-brimmed velvet hat encrusted with gold and ornamented with a tuft of snowy aigrettes Bush saw a pair of black eyes that moved with a nervous rapidity in contrast to the gross inactivity of the heavy body; the whites of the eyes were prominent and intensified the blackness of the pupils. They were eyes in which could be read all of those characteristics that had made Christophe the hero of a thousand tales. In them were boldness, vanity, cruelty and fear. Uneasily they shifted as though they feared the fidelity of the men of his own bodyguard. Then they fell on Bush and for an instant the two men regarded each other with mutual interest and surprise. In that brief period Bush also saw the wide cheek-bones and the heavy, sensuous mouth, thick lips parted, revealing large white teeth. It was a gross, bestial face, but the eyes so dominated it that the other features at first glance passed unnoticed.

DIRECTLY opposite the prisoners Christophe reined in his horse and with evident satisfaction regarded the gun lashed to its crude carriage. Slowly his eyes shifted from the huddled men to the broad panorama of the green valley and the distant plain of Le Cap. In the stillness Bush could hear the white horse pant heavily; he could hear the sound of the approaching rear guard as hoofs clicked on stones. Then directly beside him Bush saw the body of the negro who had toiled ahead of him, the man who only a few minutes before had turned on him a face filled with hate and passion, crouch as though to spring. It was the movement of a tiger, a movement that he did not comprehend. In a flash the realization of the purpose of this lithe, straining creature just in front came to him. He saw the body lean forward, poised on bent, black fingers, the bare feet working a firm toehold on the road. With a strange apathy he watched the muscles of the half-bare back tighten until the contracting flesh started again the trickle of blood drops from the dust-caked cuts left by the merciless lash. Cautiously the round black head lifted and the yellow eyes stared fixedly before him. Bush followed their gaze.

Sitting on the white horse, the king wiped the sweat from his forehead with a bit of gaudy yellow silk. He had taken off the velvet hat and uncovered the mass of crinkly black hair that was brushed back from his brow and gathered in a tight cue tied with a black ribbon at his neck. From his comfortable saddle Christophe gazed off through the twilight, and perhaps to gain a better view, he edged the horse slightly over toward the rim of the precipice. It was a striking picture against the back-drop of the sky; the superb animal, the magnificent equipment and the powerful figure of the negro gazing off across his domain.

The crouching black drew back slightly for a spring. On the brink of the precipice the king, unaware of danger, continued to feed his eyes on the distant scene. Then, as though impelled by some subtle and intuitive force, he turned his head abruptly. The cruel, penetrating eyes met the glare of the crouching negro. His hand shot to his belt. It was too late.

As though flung from a catapult, the prisoner leaped from the road. There was no one between him and his prey. One blow from that hurtling body and horse and rider would perhaps be flung into the void. In the brain of the assassin consequences undoubtedly were unconsidered; better, perhaps, that he too might fall spinning and turning through the limpid air than to die later at the hands of the king's guard.

There was no motive or thought behind Bush's action. It was the instinctive act of a man prepared by stern training in daily emergencies to act on impulse. Possibly history might have been better served if he had remained passive and watched this terrible episode without interference. But that did not happen. The whole act had been a matter of seconds. Unreasoningly, instinctively, as the prisoner sprang at Christophe, Bush leaped simultaneously; and as the negro flung past him he caught in midair the legs of the man and crashed with him on the road.

With maddened strength the negro struggled to tear himself loose from the binding arms of the white man. Writhing and turning, the two twisted on the rough stones. Through the dust Bush saw the pinkish palm of a hand reaching for his throat. A pistol thundered in his ears; acrid smoke stifled him. In his clenched arms the body of the negro struggled with a final effort that nearly tore him loose; then he felt the strength flow from the giant frame like water from a punctured skin. Heavily the man rolled limp on his side. From beneath the dead weight of the body Bush pulled his entwined arms and sat up, looking dully about him, his head still ringing with the pistol's detonation.

Unmoved, Christophe looked down at him from his saddle, a pistol smoking in his hand. Already the king's bodyguard had leaped from their horses and were gathered about him. With a long sword one of the men pricked the breast of the dead man; no tremor of animation greeted the thrust. Stiffly Bush got to his feet. There was a sudden excited flood of voices; men until that moment silent through tension gave tongue to pent-up emotion. But silently Christophe regarded John Bush, his unflinching eyes appraising the white man, his thick, red lips drawn slightly back from his strong white teeth.

Fearlessly Bush met the gaze of the king. No line or movement of the broad, black face indicated what might be passing through Christophe's mind. Only the parted lips suggested a friendly recognition of the impulsive act.

"WHAT are you doing here?" Christophe spoke in a hard, throaty voice, enunciating each word with distinct native accent. It was not the French of Nicholas or Mangan, but the French of the Santo Domingo slave.

"I am a prisoner, your Majesty." There was a drawl in the inflection, and the corners of Bush's blue eyes suggested a smile as he spoke the word "prisoner."

"A prisoner?" Christophe seemed to ponder for an explanation. "It is not usual for me to see white prisoners here. You are an American?"

Bush nodded. "I am a Philadelphian."

Behind the broad, black forehead of Christophe thoughts seemed to be struggling for expression. Then his eyes turned to the dead man in the road. He waved his hand expressively toward the cliff. The body of the would-be assassin was lifted from the road. There was a sharp command and it fell, turning slowly over and over, arms and legs flapping loosely, down toward the distant tree-tops. Perhaps there was something in the sight of that falling object that crystallized the thoughts of the king. Had it not been for the quick act of this white man he, Henri Christophe, might now be lying a broken thing beneath the trees. A king by virtue of life, but the sudden thrust and he, Christophe, would be no more than the mangled carcass of the slave. Perhaps such was the train of thought that possessed him, for the hard eyes softened a little, the parted lips broadened to a smile.

Again Christophe turned toward Bush, who stood silently watching the slowly changing expression of the king's face.

"Why are you here?" he asked.

"A number of unfortunate circumstances, your Majesty. Some actions of mine, although well intentioned, have brought down on me the enmity of several of your subjects."

"You are a man of education?"

Bush bowed gravely.

"Possibly you have had the command of men?"

"For the better part of my life I have commanded men. The brig of which I was both captain and part owner was but recently sunk as the result of a skirmish with an English frigate."

Again the black face reflected the slowly working mind. "Your name?"

"John Bush, your Majesty." The repetition of the title was not without its effect. Again the strong white teeth gleamed between parted lips.

"Captain Michel!" An officer on a black horse at the king's side saluted. "This man goes to the citadel with me. He is pardoned." Christophe turned to Bush. "Your offenses were serious, perhaps?" he questioned.

"Not murder or a crime against the state." The blue eyes seemed to demand respect, to defy a further questioning.

"Bah!" Christophe waved a square black hand, thick fingers heavy with gold rings encrusted with jewels. "What is a life worth unless it is the life of the king or of one whom the king regards with favor? I pardon you, John Bush. I do not ask your offense. It is a reward that I give you for the service you have rendered to the king. But there is further service that you can do for me. I shall not forget. I reward. . . . Captain Michel! A horse for Monsieur Bush. There is a horse."

He pointed at the red-clad officer who sat at respectful attention in front of the prisoners—the officer who not a quarter of an hour before had cursed the white man who struggled at the traces. With alacrity he scrambled down from his mount and came forward, the bridle in his hand. He was abject in servility, but in his lowered eyes Bush caught a glance that indicated the resentment that his involuntary sacrifice inspired.

So it happened that once again John Bush found himself plucked from the veritable depths of despair and placed in a position from which he could survey the possibilities of the future with reasonable hope and equanimity. With characteristic light-heartedness he fell instantly into the spirit of the new adventure and began mentally to cast about to determine what possibilities it afforded. It had been on his tongue to ask Christophe for his safe conduct to Le Cap, but his intuition told him that another motive than mere gratitude had prompted the king's action. Undoubtedly he believed that the young American could be of further service to him.

What that service might be, Bush did not attempt even to imagine. The court of Christophe teemed with men imported from every capital of Europe to assist him in the rule of his black subjects, men who for the most part contributed more largely from a knowledge of the vices of civilization than from a familiarity with those virtues which alone can create through a just and enlightened ruler a happy and prosperous people. Undoubtedly in John Bush, Christophe had sensed a man who might be valuable to him. The future would disclose the answer.

There was another reason why Bush had hesitated to plead for immediate freedom. In Leroy Mangan and Pierre Nicholas he recognized enemies of not insignificant character. Both stood high in Christophe's favor. There had as yet been no mention of names. If Christophe realized that it was the displeasure of these two men that Bush had incurred, the case might well be altered. Sooner or later he would learn of it, but for the immediate present Bush would be safe, and what was of greater importance to him, he would be in a position to attempt again an escape with Virginie.

So it was that his resilient disposition responded to this unexpected trick of fortune with a flood of high spirits, and again he was planning his next move almost as soon as he had swung himself into the saddle of his late captor.

A SORRY figure was John Bush in this new company. Half naked, barefooted, gray with dust, he rode surrounded by the very flower of the officers of the king. Polished metal sparkled; gay coats flamed against the green roadside. The spirited black horses completed the contrast. Only in his face could be seen that which neither rags nor dust could conceal. Among his companions he rode, a man who demanded recognition, a gentleman.

For the first time Bush found opportunity to look around him. Although he rode now a privileged character in the midst of the king's men, there was no converse between them. In their eyes, he realized, he was still a prisoner, relieved from menial servitude to a more agreeable but none the less hazardous position in the household of the king. And so there was time for thinking and an opportunity to study the astounding setting of this mountain fortress.

Up from Millot on the southern slope the road to the citadel had been cut back and forth, ever ascending to the three-thousand-foot pinnacle. The road swung in a wide curve. Perpendicular above them rose the walls of the citadel, a tremendous face of brick and stone pierced with innumerable gun ports, row upon row to the summit of the walls.

Around the foot of the prow they rode on a narrow graded path. Another level platform opened and above it was the south wall of the citadel, flanked to the east and west by the towering turrets. A row of light field-guns commanded the approach. The bare earth of the platform was crowded with tethered horses, piles of saddles and equipment. Everywhere were the black soldiers and officers of the king.

Through iron-studded doors of oak they entered the base of the eastern tower. Soldiers had taken their horses. On foot they passed under the high stone lintel. Inside it was dark, and from the galleries a chill wind blew steadily and made Bush conscious of his wet and heated body. In iron braziers inset in the stone tawny flames of oil-soaked wood accentuated the gloom. Up broad stone steps, turning steadily, they mounted. At each landing Bush had a glimpse of long black torch-lit galleries receding into gloom. Everywhere there was the sound of voices and of foot-steps. The vast fortification teemed with life.

From the upper landing they turned into a cavernous corridor and then through a door into an open court. Above, the first stars were faintly flickering pin-points of white in the luminous sky that flooded the court with a soft radiance. On all four sides rose the battlements of the citadel, completely enclosing the spacious area. It was the heart of the fortress, the inner fastness of Christophe's inpregnable retreat.

IT WAS eight o'clock and in the dining-room of Leroy Mangan a dozen candles in silver candlesticks gleamed on the white linen and sparkled in the polished glasses. In his dark green livery, old Lucien moved noiselessly about. Virginie sat alone at the foot of the table. Opposite her, set as though he were expected to be present, was the place of Leroy Mangan.

The girl's hand trembled slightly as she lifted a glass of claret to her lips. Monsieur Samatan had called a half-hour before; he was in her guardian's room. She had been dismissed when he entered, but she had stood for a few minutes outside the closed door. Somehow, she knew that it was of John Bush that he was speaking, but she could not hear the words, only a tantalizing murmur, dulled and unintelligible.

Monsieur Samatan, she realized, was a true friend of the captain's. Perhaps it was to plead his cause that the merchant had come to Mangan's bedside. Perhaps he would have a message for her.

Except for the promise which Pierre Nicholas had given her, she had had no word of Bush since the day previous. Had Nicholas lied to her—and she felt scant confidence in his word—the threat of her guardian might already have been carried into effect. In that case life would be over for her also. The keen stiletto that for years had rested in her guardian's cabinet was concealed beneath her pillow. That morning she had tested the sharp point against her white breast. A little thrust, a very little thrust—that would be all.

There were steps in the corridor; Monsieur Samatan was leaving. Stealthily she pushed back her chair, and hurried through the drawing-room to intercept him at the door. Monsieur Samatan was immaculate in starched linen and a high white stock on which his black chin rested in startling contrast. He was agitated and pulled nervously at his long pointed mustache.

"Monsieur Samatan!" Virginie spoke low and hurriedly. "Does he live? Is he safe?"

The merchant glanced over his shoulder down the dark corridor as though he feared to answer. *"Oui, mademoiselle."* His voice was hardly more than a harsh whisper.

"Where is he? Tell me all. What has happened?"

Monsieur Samatan edged toward the door. "Monsieur Mangan forbade me to speak with you. He knew you would question me."

Virginie raised her voice slightly and there was a tinge of anger in her tone. "Monsieur Samatan, you will answer me. You have claimed the friendship of Captain Bush. It would be his wish that you tell me all."

"Do you doubt my desire to serve you, mademoiselle? Have I not twice already sent the dumb man with a message to you?" He walked slowly through the door as he spoke and Virginie followed. As they passed from the confines of the house the restraining influence seemed to fall from them.

"He is alive, mademoiselle," the merchant continued more easily. "It was ordered that he was to be shot but I persuaded Monsieur Nicholas to order a reprieve. There is a matter of some money between us, and Monsieur Nicholas was amiable."

"Where is Captain Bush now?"

Monsieur Samatan made a gesture of despair. "It is the only thing that could be done, mademoiselle; he is sent with the prisoners to the citadel."

She gave a little cry and covered her face with her hands as though to shut out the picture of her imagination.

"Oh, monsieur! Death is as certain there. Would it not perhaps have been best for the good God to take him at once?" She was sobbing softly and her fingers were wet with tears. "Have I not seen them go, hundreds and hundreds of them, every week for years, to die at that cruel work!"

Monsieur Samatan put his hand on her arm. "Hush! The trees are listening and they will repeat. Hasty words can only bring certain ruin to the man you would save."

"Can he be saved?"

"Perhaps. Monsieur Mangan does not know that he still lives. Later he will learn. Then perhaps you can win him to give his release, if he will leave here never to return."

"Captain Bush will not do that."

"Then, mademoiselle, what more can be done for him? I have gone further than even my position permits. I have saved his life and I shall still try to save him, but—"

A thought occurred to her. "Would Monsieur Nicholas have prevented the execution had you not talked with him as you did?"

Monsieur Samatan shook his head. "Monsieur Nicholas desired his death. He had taken no steps to prevent it."

"Thank you, monsieur, for all that you have done. God will reward you."

She went at once to her room and from its hiding-place took out the stiletto and again tested its point against her breast. He lived! Yes, and he might some day return to her. But in five days Nicholas would exact of her her promise. She thrust the knife back. At least a little time remained of life and hope. Then, if necessary, here would be her answer to Pierre Nicholas.

IT WAS ten o'clock when Virginie finally flung herself on her bed and sank almost immediately into a sleep of exhaustion. And it was ten o'clock when John Bush, bathed and refreshed with food and wine, lay down to a troubled repose in a room in the private apartments of the king in the lofty citadel.

At this same hour, under the warm, starlit night, two men might have been seen walking steadily along the white and dusty highway which led from Le Cap Française to the town of Millot. They were an ill-matched pair; for one was a negro of unusual height and intensity of color, while the other was a white man, short, stocky, and with the tarred pigtail and varnished straw hat of the sailor. No conversation passed between them, but occasionally the white man made some audible comment on the character of the country through which they were advancing, at which the black would nod vigorously, shaking his head until the wide brim of his woven palm hat flapped violently.

"Luke," said Huggett, "I think the captain must have found this a hard passage, beat up and out like he was."

The negro made a throaty sound and the hat brim fanned his face.

"Must hev been two hours since we left that trader, Samatan," Huggett continued. "White he is, says I, if he be black. Eh, Luke, my man?"

Again the negro signified agreement. Huggett hitched at his waist and his fingers confirmed the presence of his sheathed knife inside the wide sash around his hips. Then he thrust his hand inside the open front of his shirt. Suspended from a piece of line around his neck, a small package rested against his hairy chest.

"Samatan sure sets a heap of value on that ring." His blunt fingers pinched the small package as he spoke. "Stone bug, thet's all it be, except there be magic in it."

The whites of Luke's eyes rolled excitedly and he made a gesture with his arm which Huggett either ignored or failed to recognize.

"Says if we gets on a lee shore and hard put to it, to open the package and show the ring, but on no account to give it to no one 'cept the captain, and to him the sooner the better."

THE light of the new day had already touched the citadel when a bugle aroused Bush from his dreams. With a start he lifted himself on his elbow and looked about him. In this lofty mountain fastness he was, if not a prisoner, at least unable to follow the one desire that motivated his every action—to return to Le Cap.

Sitting on the edge of the bed, he examined the clothing that one of the king's aides had brought to him the night before. The high black leather boots were of French make, and the white knee-breeches, from the fineness of the material, were obviously from the hands of some Parisian tailor. The coat was of crimson broadcloth lavishly adorned with bullion, and the shirt and stock were of the finest linen. It was the uniform of the king's personal guard.

Was it the intention of Christophe to hold him indefinitely? Carefully he considered his situation. Possibly this was simply an attempt to reward him for the act that he had performed. At all events, he realized, he must not seem unappreciative of the honor tacitly conferred upon him. And at a suitable time he would plead for his release.

Then he saw again the leering face of Nicholas and heard his boast of the wedding day. The recollection galvanized him and he sat on the bedside trembling with a powerless fury. Two days had gone by; this was the morning of the third; whatever might be done must be done instantly. There was no time to lose.

He dressed slowly, pondering meanwhile. To conceive a plan was impossible. Out of his present situation there seemed to be no loophole by which he might effect his own escape, much less the rescue of Virginie from the power of Pierre Nicholas.

There was a knock on the door, and an orderly entered.

"Monsieur Bush?" He saluted as he spoke.

"Yes?"

"The king requests your immediate presence."

They followed a short corridor and passed into the circular room in which Bush had last seen the king on the evening before. The interior was as yet unfinished, for the white plaster walls were devoid of paneling or ornament. The ceiling was circular and rose to a dome that gave an exaggerated effect of height. On the highly polished floor a dozen gilt chairs were clustered in disorder around a large table of yellow mahogany on which were piled maps, books and a great clutter of papers of every description. A fire was burning in the hearth although warm air was already flooding in from the courtyard through the open door.

Against the fireplace with his back to the hearth stood Christophe. His legs were spread slightly and his hands were caught together behind his back. He was quietly dressed in black knee-breeches and black silk stockings which seemed to emphasize the powerful muscular development of his legs, and his large flat feet were encased in low leather slippers with silver buckles. He wore a loose shirt of fine linen and the open throat disclosed the thick, corded neck and powerful chest.

All these things Bush noticed in a sweeping glance, but it was always the face of Christophe that caught and held attention. Negro in its every characteristic, there was something in the low forehead, the penetrating eyes, now defiant and now furtive, and the large, sensuous mouth with its array of strong, white teeth that made the face unforgettable. It was the face of a tyrant, merciless and cruel.

"You wear well the uniform of my favorites, monsieur." His voice was harsh but there was evident in the tone a desire to express friendliness.

Bush bowed. "You do me much honor, your Majesty."

Steadily Christophe regarded him without speaking. From the courtyard came the sound of feet and the sharp order of command. The troops were at drill. Another order, and musket butts clanked against the pavement.

"You can write well, eh?" Christophe spoke at last. "You are something of a scholar, perhaps?"

"I can write, yes, English and French. Of Spanish, a little."

"Yes? That is good. Paul Dulac, it is he who does those things for me; he is sick. Until he returns you will write for me."

IN A flash Bush recalled the gossip he had so often heard of the illiteracy of the king. Formerly a waiter in one of the cafés of Le Cap, he had risen during the reign of his predecessor to the rank of general by the sheer virtue of his power of leadership, and on Dessalines's death had by that same domination brought about his own election to the presidency, an office which he had soon afterward changed to that of king. In his rapid rise there had been no time for educational advancement. It was said that the waiter-king could neither read nor write. The future would soon tell.

An hour passed. Bush had breakfasted and returned to the circular office of the king. Before the fire, which had burned down to a little heap of white and faintly smoking ashes, Christophe stood in Napoleonic pose, one hand concealed beneath the soft white ruffles of the shirt front. From time to time an orderly entered and with a click of his heels and a smart salute announced the name of some one who would see the king.

All who presented themselves were necessarily officers stationed at the citadel. Their reports were apparently daily affairs whenever the king was present, a personal contact by which Christophe intimately followed the operations of his armed forces and under which the entire kingdom was operated. A tropic rainstorm the night before had caused a leak in the magazine and a barrel of powder had been dampened. Christophe personally was informed of the occurrence and of the fact that the powder was now drying in the sun. A short, fat officer, whose gray, grizzled beard hid the black skin beneath, reported a rumor of revolutionary talk among certain men at Limonade. The king's eyes narrowed to a slit and his lips bared the big white teeth. A company of fifty men would proceed at once. No one, however slightly suspected of the treason, should be allowed to escape. Their execution must be reported to him as quickly as possible. Another officer followed: two sentries had slept at their posts. Again the eyes of the king closed, catlike; again the lips retreated from the pink gums. It was his expression indicating death. In curt rasping words the confirmation of their immediate execution followed.

Constantly the sinister figure of death seemed to stand at the shoulder of the king. Instant execution was his prompt solution of every problem. His power was the fear of his subjects; and his symbol of might was the leaden bullet of the firing squad, or the assassin's knife.

The papers through which Bush had been wandering, his attention half occupied by his interest in the conversation of Christophe, were of a miscellaneous character: reports from various officers in charge of villages and districts, statements of taxes received and military disbursements, confidential communications containing reports of secret agents, and occasionally a plea for the mercy of the king from some high officer caught in the web of the espionage system, which, next to the actual military forces, seemed to be the king's most potent arm of strength.

"Does your Majesty desire to read any of these papers?" Bush inquired.

The eyes of Christophe rested heavily on him, but Bush met the stare with a look of bland innocence. The king waved aside the proffered papers Bush had selected.

"Later, my young friend, you may read to me whatever I should hear." He had relapsed into the native dialect which he invariably used when he talked familiarly, and the mongrel French words and pronunciation seemed to confirm his ignorance.

"Write," he commanded, "to Captain Le Brun at Le Cap and say that he shall report at once to the citadel, and I shall put at the bottom my name, the name of Christophe." The heavy chest swelled perceptibly beneath the white ruffles.

"And also," he continued, "write to Captain Pierre Nicholas."

The quill suspended in Bush's hand did not tremble nor was there a perceptible flutter in the blue eyes. Calmly he waited, but underneath the crimson coat his heart was pounding with suppressed excitement, for suddenly there had occurred to him a plan which the next few minutes might make possible, a plan which would perhaps circumvent the designs of Nicholas and give to Bush the opportunity to attempt another flight with Virginie.

"You will say," Christophe continued, "that he will remain at Le Cap and by this order is advanced to the command of Port Picolet. Also write to General Fournier, who now commands the fort. Let him come to me at once. Bah! That man, there! He is a pig. I will teach him how to follow the commands of Christophe."

In his bold flowing hand Bush wrote the three orders. Then he sanded the drying ink and carefully read what he had written. The penmanship was excellent and the flowery phrasing of the orders seemed in keeping with the distended chest and Napoleonic bearing of the king. A second time Bush read the third letter; then he pushed back his chair and with a grave bow presented the three sheets of paper to Christophe.

The king waved them aside. "Read to me what you have."

Slowly Bush read the letter he had composed to Captain Le Brun; then the one to Captain Nicholas, and last, the order to General Fournier to report in person to the citadel. He read distinctly and with exaggerated emphasis the rounded phrases, but there was a slight difference between what was written and the words his lips uttered, for the letter dictated to Nicholas to take command of Port Picolet was addressed to Captain Le Brun, and that letter which should have summoned Le Brun to the citadel was indited to Captain Pierre Nicholas.

"YOUR signature, your Majesty." It was the crucial minute. Carefully Bush spread out the letters on the table and dipped the quill in the ink. Then he pulled out the chair that Christophe might seat himself.

From the distance the king studied the three squares of paper as though undetermined whether or not he would obey the suggestion of the young American. Then with dramatic dignity he paced across the floor and, sitting heavily in the chair, took the quill from Bush's hand.

One by one he appeared to read the letters before him. Behind the chair Bush, fascinated, watched the powerful black hand that clutched the long white feather.

"*Bon!* My young friend, that is good."

Awkwardly as a child's the short fingers traced a large "C" at the foot of the letter to Le Brun. For a second the fingers paused suspended above the paper. Then in irregular letters he traced the word "Rex" behind the "C." Once again he inscribed the grotesque signature. Then he dipped the quill in the ink. Only the letter to Nicholas remained.

"My friend, the king writes!" he commented with dignity.

Again, and for the third time he traced the letters. It was signed. With affected leisure Bush folded the sheets and thrust them in his breast.

"They shall be sent by courier, at once, your Majesty."

The king had once more taken his position before the fire. He nodded assent. With his cheeks flushed with the success of his coup, Bush bowed and went through the door to the courtyard.

The first act of John Bush, after leaving the apartment of Christophe, was to search out the officer in charge of the king's couriers and start on their way the three letters bearing the royal signature. Then, with a natural curiosity to which his position granted ready gratification, he began an apparently casual, but, as a matter of fact, intensive examination of the citadel.

It was noon when he sat down with a dozen of the officers of the king's bodyguard for the midday meal. In the first few hours he had completed as far as possible his first survey of the fortress. In size and in the completeness of its equipment it far exceeded even his most highly colored expectations. In the endless galleries and barracks five thousand men could easily be housed. The magazine contained casks of powder apparently sufficient to serve the guns of the fort indefinitely. In the vaulted rooms of the armory were innumerable stands of muskets, bayonets without number, and cases piled high to the roof containing flints and spare locks and gun barrels. A system of stone cisterns fed by springs supplied water in quantity and of the greatest purity, and in the commissary were stored provisions to serve the garrison for a year at the most conservative calculation.

As yet the citadel was incomplete. In the long galleries which rose in four stories one above another on three sides, only a few of the great guns were in place. Slowly these were being hauled from Le Cap, huge smooth-bore pieces of bronze; guns bought by Christophe from the French; guns which now from their stanch carriages were to point their black muzzles down at the green valleys from which at any moment the king might expect to see the armies of Pétion fling themselves against his final refuge. Alongside the guns that were in place were piled pyramids of round shot and beneath the wooden hatches in the floor close to the trail of each gun the powder hoists dropped down to subterranean passages where the buckets could be loaded directly from the magazines.

It was late afternoon when Bush had completed his investigation of the interior of the fortress and found himself in a tower that rose, the apex of the structure, high above the southern battlements. As he reached the top and first gazed about him the magnificence of the scene broke upon him with a force that almost dazed him.

On every side, from the ramparts of the citadel the world seemed to drop abruptly into a void. Like a tremendous tower crowned by the fortress, Le Bonnet Evêque rose almost perpendicularly three thousand feet from the surrounding valley. To the south and west, across the dark valley far below, the mountains of Santo Domingo blue-green in the slanting light tumbled like an angry sea of torn earth, forest-clad, wild and desolate. Clouds drifted among their summits; far as the eye could see they extended, a tremendous relief map upon which John Bush gazed down from his man-made aerie.

Slowly he walked down the successive stairways to the broad parapet on a mighty buttress that was built out from the body of the fortress overhanging the cliff upon which its foundation rested. For three hundred feet the wall of masonry rose perpendicular and below its base the cliff, a face of torn rock, dropped four hundred feet more to the tops of the distant palm trees that crowded up against its base.

DIZZY from the consciousness of altitude, he drew back and crouched on his heels. Here on this giddy height a year before, Christophe had displayed the subordination of his troops to three horrified officers of the French army. Bush could see them in his imagination crowding back with blanched faces behind the black king who with bared gums and slit-like eyes gave the harsh order of execution. To the beating of drums, in ranks of five, fifty of the king's troops in full equipment marched down the parapet!

"Squads left." The foremost rank wheeled. Tramp, tramp, pounded their shod feet. A French officer gave a little startled cry. With left feet lifted the front rank had disappeared over the brink. The second followed. The third too was gone. Four, five, six—ten; the parapet was bare!

"*Voilà, mes amis!*" There was the smile of a beast on Christophe's lips. "My troops obey, eh?" He made no mention of the worse than death which would have followed their disobedience!

There was no limitation to sight. Miles away in the plain John Bush could see the thread of the road appearing and then disappearing among the trees. By now the courier should be clattering into Le Cap. The orders he carried were imperative. No one dared delay on the command of Christophe. As soon as horses could be saddled Pierre Nicholas would set out for the citadel. By dawn of tomorrow he should report to the king.

What then? Bush in his imagination construed the probable sequence of events. It must be he, Bush, who would first meet Nicholas. After that? He shrugged his crimson-clad shoulders.

A soldier was approaching him along the parapet. Ten feet away he stopped and saluted. Bush rose and returned the salute.

"Monsieur, a man is held at the guardhouse who wishes to speak with you."

"Lead the way."

Who could the man be? Who was there in all the world who could desire speech with him? The guardhouse struck an ominous note. It must be some one from the outer world. A messenger, perhaps. Instantly he thought of Virginie. Could it be from her that this stranger had come? The possibility quickened his steps.

"Ah!" It was Luke, but he dared not call him by name.

In the gloom of the small damp room by the entrance he saw the giant negro standing between puny guards. A broad smile slashed the black face with a gleam of glistening teeth.

"Release him. It is a matter that concerns the king!"

The guards retreated respectfully. At a sign the negro followed Bush into the hall outside the door.

"You have something for me?" Bush asked.

Luke fumbled in his breast. Then he slipped over his head a light cord with a small package attached to it, and with a guttural sound from his parted lips thrust it into Bush's hand.

Bush unknotted the cord and untied the package. Inside the outer wrapping was a sheet of paper closely folded, and within it was a heavy gold ring set with a grayish green scarab. Automatically he slipped the ring over a finger of his right hand and then unfolded the paper. It contained only a few sentences and was signed by Samatan. Bush held the paper close to his eyes to decipher the words in the dim light:

> **Monsieur:**
>
> The ring which I send will serve you if a time of great necessity comes to you. I send it by your faithful servant, who is accompanied by Thomas Huggett, who also desires to aid you in your endeavors. Consider not the ring slightly.
>
> Your obt. servant,
> Napoleon Samatan.

"Huggett is with you?"

Luke shook his head violently.

"Ah! He is at Millot? Down there?" He pointed toward the distant town in the valley.

A smile of assent gave answer.

"Good! Return to Millot. Do you understand? There wait with Huggett for me at the café. At any hour of day or night I may come." Bush paused. "And, if possible, have horses; three horses, where you can get them instantly. Do you understand?"

Luke nodded and disappeared through the guardroom door, as silently and as suddenly as he had come. It would be a simple matter, Bush realized, for the negro to await his coming at Millot. Luke's familiarity with the country and his understanding of the language enabled him to pass without suspicion; and his dumbness in this particular emergency was an additional safeguard. As for Huggett, Bush felt no concern. Doubtless the sailor had traveled with Luke to Millot in the guise of a trader. It was not unusual for an occasional white man to go inland to Christophe's mountain capital; many foreigners appeared there from time to time. Inwardly he thanked Providence for the loyalty of the two men, for their unswerving devotion which was to serve him far better than he even realized.

Luke and Huggett must have received the information of his transportation to the citadel from Samatan; it was doubtless on Samatan's suggestion that they had followed him. If there was more to the plan the future would disclose it.

Again his speculation turned to the ring. There was nothing particularly remarkable about it: an Egyptian scarab set in a plain gold band. But Santo Domingo was teeming with superstition. From Africa strange and terrible beliefs and practices had been brought by the slaves and handed down from generation to generation. Witchcraft was practiced. No one was immune from the taint of superstitious beliefs. Doubtless some mysterious power was attributed to the ring he now wore.

THAT evening Bush sat again at the round table in Christophe's apartment and transcribed letters for the royal signature; but it was difficult for him to hold his thoughts on the work before him, for in imagination he was sitting on the stone bench in the moonlit garden of Leroy Mangan with the fountain's jet like a silver bell sounding in his ear, or riding through the night with Pierre Nicholas out from Le Cap along the white road that led to Millot and the citadel.

It was late when the king dismissed him. In his room the air was warm and lifeless, and without undressing he flung himself down for a few hours of troubled sleep. Against the ceiling fireflies flashed their green light like errant stars and through the open doors bats fluttered in soft-winged flight.

The room had grown cold when Bush awoke. He shivered slightly and his hand moved to draw a blanket over him. Then like a flash the occurrences of the day previous passed before him. It was still night but dawn could not be far distant, and with dawn would come Pierre Nicholas. Even now Nicholas must be spurring the fresh horse that had awaited him at Millot up the twisting road to the citadel. At the earliest opportunity that morning he would report himself to Christophe and present the falsified order to explain his presence. Sometime between his arrival and that interview it was necessary that Bush should encounter him. Within that little bracket of time must occur the drama which Bush had planned.

He slipped into the crimson coat and with his bare hands in lieu of a comb smoothed back his hair from his forehead. Groping in the darkness he found his sword where he had hung it on a chair-back, a lean, straight blade of English steel. The world outside was bright with starlight and the huge court seemed like a white square surrounded by the impenetrable shadows of the walls.

He hurried across the court and found himself in the corridor that led down by the wide stone stairs three stories to the entrance of the citadel. At the stairhead he paused and listened. From the guardroom came the muffled sound of voices. He walked a few feet down the gun gallery and peered out of a vacant port. It was light, a soft white light that preceded the dawn. A hundred feet below on the terrace in front of the entrance two horses cropped the short grass; they were still saddled and bridled and their necks and flanks were white with froth. Sounds from below caused Bush to retrace his steps to the stairhead. There were two voices that he did not recognize; then a third voice replied. It was the voice of Pierre Nicholas.

Already Bush could hear his feet on the stairs and the clicking of his spurs. Hurriedly he stepped back through the door to the courtyard. Undoubtedly Nicholas would go immediately to the quarters of the king's bodyguard and there wait for the morning to present himself to Christophe. In that case he must pass through the door where Bush was standing.

The approaching steps sounded loud on the landing. From his place Bush heard them cross the corridor. Then a man stepped out from the doorway, and at the same instant Bush confronted him. It was Nicholas.

"Sacré Dieu!" Nicholas took a step backward, startled by the sudden apparition. Then he peered into Bush's face.

"It is I, John Bush."

Nicholas instinctively reached for his sword hilt. In the dim light Bush could read the amazement in his eyes.

"Stop, Pierre Nicholas, there is a matter to be settled between us. I have awaited your arrival."

"Out of my way. The king has summoned me. I shall find time for you later." There was an ugly sneer in Nicholas's voice and as he spoke he started to pass the man who confronted him.

"Easy, monsieur." Bush spoke with the gentleness that invariably characterized his most violent emotions. "It was I, Pierre Nicholas, who wrote the letter which brought you here."

"The king signed it, fool."

"But, monsieur, one forgets perhaps that Christophe reads but poorly and if a letter intended for General Fournier should be addressed to Nicholas, and the one for Nicholas—"

A torrent of abuse broke from the lips of Nicholas. With a thrust of his arm he flung Bush back against the wall. Recoiling from the blow with an unexpected suddenness, Bush leaped to the side of his assailant. An arm in a crimson sleeve shot through the half-light and with a stinging impact the flat of the bare hand fell full across the face of Nicholas.

Half crouching and face to face, the two men regarded each other.

"NOW, monsieur, perhaps you will fight." The gentle stroking tone was gone from Bush's voice.

Let it be said to the credit of Pierre Nicholas that he was not a coward. Treacherous and lying as he might be when baser actions seemed best to serve his purposes, the crisis never found him reluctant to defend his dubious honor in the manner of the times. Like many of the better class of his countrymen, he had been educated at Paris. And that education, equally characteristic of the period, placed strong emphasis on the defense of honor by the sword. His training in that art had been thorough, and a natural aptitude had given him something of a mastery of the long blade at his belt.

Nicholas drew himself to his full height and bowed slightly. "I am at your service, Monsieur Bush; at your convenience."

"There is no better time than the present," Bush answered. He glanced at the sky. It was already brilliant with the blue of day. "The parapet yonder," he suggested. "It is wide and smooth."

From within the fortification a bugle sounded. Then from another part of the citadel a second took up the call. From the summit of the battlements gray feathers of smoke were rising, and within the grimy gray walls was the sound of awakening life.

In silence they walked across the courtyard and climbed the steps which led toward the parapet.

"Your sword is one to which you are not accustomed," Nicholas remarked.

"And you are wearied with your night in the saddle."

They reached the wide level space which looked down upon the world. In the east the sun was climbing the horizon and the ocean flamed with golden light. Far below on the plain white wraiths of mist filled the lowlands. A cock was crowing in that other earth below. It was infinitely still.

Without words the two men removed their coats and rolled back the ruffled sleeves on their right arms. Nicholas drew his sword and with a faint gesture presented the hilt to Bush. The other waved it aside.

"Keep your sword, Monsieur Nicholas. They are both equally strange to me."

How little Bush knew of swordsmanship Nicholas may have suspected, for in his varied experiences there had been few occasions when Bush had had opportunity to profit by the teaching of an experienced master. Yet he possessed some slight knowledge and a natural aptitude which slightly offset his disadvantage.

They faced each other with blades raised in salute. With a click of steel the lowered swords crossed. Right arms outstretched and bodies turned on widespread feet, thrust parried thrust.

The large white face of Nicholas was expressionless except that the lips were tightly set and the black eyes fixed the American with a look of confidence.

Slowly, under a succession of lunges, Bush was forced back along the parapet. Then the blue eyes grew cold; a flush tinged his cheeks. In a frenzy of thrusts he drove Nicholas back and beyond the distance he had lost.

"Ah!" The word came with a hissing breath from the thick pale lips as with a skilful feint Nicholas's sword-point pierced the white forearm of the American.

"Are you satisfied, monsieur?" Nicholas parried leisurely as he spoke.

"No!" With a rush Bush flung himself forward. The whirling blades glittered in the sunshine. Steel clashed against steel.

But in that second, Nicholas's eyes had glanced from the strained face before him to the white right hand that grasped the sword hilt. And on the third finger of that tense hand he had seen something that caused him momentarily to retreat before the onrush. On the third finger of Bush's hand a scarab beetle was held by a ring of gold.

Bush saw a fleeting look of dismay on the white face that he did not understand. Only he recognized that for some unknown reason Nicholas was on the defensive and retreating before him.

Step by step Bush worked his way forward. Behind the retreating Nicholas the edge of the parapet, unobstructed by even a ledge, barred the way. Again Bush lunged to pierce the other's defense, and again he bore Nicholas backward.

"HOLD!" The word came like a cry of terror from Bush's lips. His sword rattled on the stones. In that last step the right heel of Nicholas had caught on a protruding fragment in the pavement. His body thrown from its poise, he reeled backward. His right hand shot out behind him to break the fall, but the edge of the parapet was beneath his heels and the hand clutched wildly at the empty air. Slowly, it seemed, he turned in the air and backward fell head foremost from the edge, his sword still clenched in an extended arm.

A feeling of nausea brought Bush to his knees. Down in that blue gulf a black object fell, turning slowly, disappearing into the roof of trees, far down below the cliff, a thousand feet below.

He glanced behind him at the courtyard. Some soldiers were already forming, probably to relieve the guard. There was no time to lose if an escape was to be effected. At any minute word of Nicholas's arrival at La Ferrière might be carried to the royal apartments and search would be made for him. It was not unlikely that some watchful eye had seen the two men on the parapet. Quickly the sequence of possible events passed before him. Thrusting his sword into its scabbard, he walked hurriedly to the stairs and ran down them to the courtyard.

A sentry dozed at the entrance of the king's apartment, but his sleep-filled eyes recognized the uniform, and Bush passed through the doorway without hindrance. On the round table the papers were still heaped in disordered piles and a few were scattered about the floor where they had been blown by the storm of the night before. Bush selected at random a large document at the top of which were printed the royal arms and the words *Le Roi* in bold, black letters. Thrusting the paper in his breast, he walked through the corridor to his bedchamber and took from the chair where he had left it the gold-encrusted hat which had been given to him with his uniform.

No one spoke to him when he crossed the courtyard and as he descended the stairs in the half-light the two soldiers whom he passed flattened against the wall with an awkward salute and with no apparent surprise in their eyes.

In the guardroom a dozen men sprawled on wooden benches against the stone walls. A candle guttered in a wine bottle on a table. Through a barred peep-hole in one of the massive doors the daylight poured, a palpable bar of light that intensified the darkness of the room and paled the tongue of flame at the candle tip.

"Attention!" The men scuffled to their feet. "I come from the king. Quickly! A horse."

A *sous-lieutenant*, who evidently was in command, picked up the candle and thrust it in Bush's face. Then he saw the uniform and came sharply to salute.

"Quick there! Open the gate. And you"—he thrust a black finger at one of the soldiers—"horses from the stables." He turned again to Bush, "You wish how many men?"

"None."

"Alone? It is against the orders."

Bush reached in his breast and held the paper under the startled eyes of the young negro.

"Do you hesitate to carry out my orders? Do you wish to hinder the business of the king?"

At the door the soldier who had been told to bring the horses hesitated. The *sous-lieutenant* turned on him with an oath.

"Did I not order a horse?" he shouted.

The man fled precipitately. Through the door which he had left open the daylight streamed into the room, disclosing walls of huge blocks of hewn stone and up in the gloom the vaulted roof streaked with the stains of moisture. Unnoticed, the candle sputtered and died. The soldiers had again relaxed and flung themselves on the benches. In an awkward silence the two men regarded each other.

"You ride to Le Cap?" The *sous-lieutenant* inquired. It was a casual remark; he was not seeking information; the white face and the steady blue eyes which seemed to study him embarrassed him.

"Perhaps."

There was another period of silence, then Bush saw hanging against the wall a pair of pistols in holsters. Except for his sword, he was unarmed. With apparent unconcern, he walked across the floor and flung the holsters, which were buckled together, across his shoulder.

"They are loaded?" he asked.

The officer nodded. Evidently he desired to protest but fear restrained him.

WITH his ears strained to detect a sound, Bush waited. Had his disappearance been noticed, any moment might bring the noise of feet on the stairs. There could be no escape. He would be trapped. Undoubtedly the officer of the guardroom attributed his evident impatience to the urgency of the business which the document indicated. Minutes passed. Together they walked to the door and stood waiting on the threshold. Outside on the terrace the black horse that had carried Nicholas to La Ferrière so short a time before cropped the scant grass; the smooth flanks still shone with sweat, and the saddle blanket that lay beside the saddle on the ground was dark with moisture.

There was a clatter of hoofs and around the corner at the far end of the terrace the soldier who had been sent for the horse came galloping; a moment later he swung from the saddle, the bridle in his hand.

"Good!" Bush stroked the high-arched neck. "And you, monsieur"—he turned to the officer—"I do not need to warn you that the king desires there be no announcement of the departure of his messenger."

The *sous-lieutenant* drew himself to a

salute. "We are not free with words," he answered.

With forced slowness Bush inspected the saddle. Then he swung himself easily to the horse's back. The terrace was deserted except for the young officer and the grazing horse. He glanced up at the walls. So straight and so high were they that they seemed to incline above him, an illusion heightened by a white wisp of cloud that sailed slowly across the edge far up against the blue. The three superimposed rows of black ports were deserted; no faces peered down at him from loophole or battlement.

Once again he glanced back at the citadel. From the trees the towering prow hung almost above him. Then the road turned and he gave his attention to the winding way which led down to Millot.

The air refreshed him, and as he turned a corner a cool breeze from the sea fanned his heated face. From the citadel to the palace, he estimated, was about three hours' ride. That would be at the very best, for the horse must be saved against an unforeseen emergency or more probable pursuit. Sooner or later his escape would be noticed. The guardroom officer would be brought to Christophe and questioned. A smile played about his lips as he thought of the black face of Christophe when the news would be brought to him.

He examined the pistols which he had fastened to his saddle. The flints were bright and clean and the priming in the pans assured him that they were loaded. He had no ball or powder, but there would be no time to reload if it were necessary to use them. At least he had two charges and his sword.

For at least three hours, he estimated, he had ridden, when through a break in the trees he saw a dome against the patch of green. It was the palace at Millot. The first stage of the escape was accomplished.

The broad street was deserted as Bush rode out from behind the palace grounds and turned his horse toward the thatched building at the roadside which must be the inn. In the tropic heat of noon open doors and windows seemed gaping to catch a breath of cooling air; ineffectual for shade, the palm trees flung their distant clumps of green against a sky of startling blue. Except for a woman's voice raised in a thin plaintive song and the metallic strokes of a hammer in a smithy behind the inn, it might have been reasonable to believe that a plague had swept the village or that on that morning the entire population of Millot had been commandeered by the king to drag his cannons to the citadel.

Bush tied his horse to a rail in front of the inn and strode through the open door. For a second his eyes, burned by the outside glare, struggled to penetrate the comparative gloom of the long, low room. Then he saw more clearly, a man sprang up from a chair in a far corner and almost before he could recognize the face or the stocky figure, a hand was thrust into his own and a familiar voice was speaking, almost incoherent with joy at his deliverance. It was Huggett.

As though realizing the surprise which this unprecedented outburst of emotion must have occasioned, the sailor as abruptly relapsed into his usual deference. He waved a blunt hand at the chair in which he had been sitting.

"It's a day and night I've set in yon chair, cap'n," he commented.

"Luke?"

"He's here. I see ye have a horse, but there's three waiting in a cabin outside the town, such as they are."

"How did you know where they had taken me?" Bush sat down in a chair and Huggett perched on the edge of another beyond the table.

"Samatan. Luke fetched me to his house. Come ashore, I had, to look for ye. So Samatan fixed me up for a trader with a box of jimcracks, the packet Luke took to ye, and gold for our purposes, and gives the sailing directions for Millot." He paused for a breath. "And here we be, cap'n, waiting for your orders."

"Mademoiselle Virginie?"

"All's well, cap'n, far as I've been told." He regarded Bush's uniform, a question in his eyes.

Bush read the look. "No time to explain now, Huggett. By now they are well after me. I must get to Le Cap, quickly. You say the horses are ready?"

HUGGETT held out a restraining hand. "Better eat and drink, sir, unless the food I've stowed in the saddle bags will do ye. Ye look weary and it's a long way we'll travel yet before we can sit down again."

But Bush was already at the door. "Come," he commanded. "There's no time now for food or talk."

In a small cabin at the end of the street Luke was waiting. An expression of joy flashed over his face as Bush and Huggett entered and he flung himself on the floor and clasped Bush about the knees with his long arms, overcome by the intensity of his emotion.

Bush touched the bowed figure gently on the shoulder. "Get up, Luke. There is more yet that you shall do for me. I thank you for what you have done. I can never forget it."

The negro stumbled to his feet and the broad black face seemed straining for words he could not utter. Then he smiled broadly with a flash of gleaming teeth, rolling his eyes upward until only the whites were visible.

Behind the cabin three stunted horses crunched lazily on a pile of cane. They were saddled and bridled, and Luke made no attempt to untie the reins from the tree to which they were tethered. With a slight touch he turned Bush again to the cabin, and wondering what might be his desire, the two white men followed. In a corner a pot hung over a bed of embers. The negro lifted the lid and pointed to the contents. Then he selected two gourd bowls from a shelf and from a pile of rubbish in the corner drew out a square green bottle.

"Wants us to to eat and drink, captain." Huggett squatted on the floor as he spoke. "Best let him have his way, sir; it's good sense, that's wot it is."

Bush nodded and the two men ate ravenously of the stew, washed down with gulps of tafia from the bottle. Through a chink in the thatched roof a patch of sunlight fell straight down to the dirt floor.

"High noon," Huggett commented, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "Couldn't be better timed, captain, if you're wishing to make port in the dark."

Stretched on his back on the floor, his head elevated on an arm crossed behind it, Bush watched the chameleons scurry among the thatch, and the bar of sunshine flood through the torn roof. Finally he spoke.

"We'll be at Le Cap after dark, Huggett. I shall go at once to Mademoiselle Virginie. You and Luke will report to Monsieur Samatan. If there is a vessel in the harbor, we must arrange passage on board. If there is no ship"—he paused, not through indecision, but to emphasize the alternative—"then we must either get to Mole St. Nicholas, or remain in hiding at Le Cap until some ship arrives. The details will be difficult, I need not warn you of that. Nor should I, after the skill with which you have conducted so far." He rocked to a sitting posture and got to his feet. "Come, we must be off."

All afternoon the little cavalcade retraced the road to Le Cap. Occasional bands of soldiers, recognizing the uniform of the white man, deferentially stepped aside to let him pass. Peasants scrambled out of their way hurriedly. Sometimes riding but more often running beside his horse, the great negro kept pace with the riders. Once or twice they paused for a few minutes to water and rest the horses, but in the main they proceeded steadily. By twilight the mountains already seemed far behind, an ominous barrier on the horizon. Ahead lay the level plain and the long worn road.

It had occurred to Bush that his uniform might now serve to identify him if the pursuers questioned the soldiers or natives whom he passed, but on second thought he realized that his identity would under any possible circumstances be impossible to conceal, and for the time being the uniform of the king's guard would serve as a protection and a passport—at least until they should reach Le Cap.

THE light was failing when Huggett, who rode slightly in the lead, checked his horse and pointed to the right, where the battered columns of a massive ornamental gate had once opened on the driveway to some French villa.

"Stopped there before," he explained. "There's a spring, and grass."

Bush glanced at the horses. The intense heat of the long afternoon and the pace at which they had ridden showed in lathered flanks and drooping heads. Delay was dangerous, but, he realized, a time might come a few hours later when the strength of the horses would be of vital importance. A half-hour's rest would perhaps forestall disaster. He nodded assent and Huggett turned into the driveway.

Through an avenue of towering royal palms, a road, now overgrown with grass and bushes, led straight for half a mile to the ruins of a large building. Picking their way, the horses followed the footpath that wound along the abandoned road. Ahead, the ruined villa stood impressive in the yellow evening light. The roof was gone and the stone walls were scorched and blackened. Over them a tangle of vines threw a green mantle from which scarlet blossoms flamed like glowing embers. In the fading light, bats swooped in and out through the gaunt apertures of vacant doors and windows.

IN THE open space before the house the riders stopped to look about them. Now a tangle of poinsettia trees and wild coffee crowded almost to the walls. On the right the slave quarters were barely visible through the dense undergrowth, a group of wattled cabins, their thatched roofs fallen between the walls in dilapidated decay. On the left, also half hidden by the foliage, were the walls of what must have been at one time a pretentious building, probably a sugar mill, close at hand beneath the watchful eye of the proprietor.

They dismounted and turned the horses loose to browse on the lush grass.

Then, as Bush paused beside his horse to disengage the holsters and saddle bags, a distant sound caught his ears. It was very still. Tranquil as the luminous twilight the air hung soundless about them, so quiet that Bush sensed the stillness even before the sound which transfixed him was recorded on his senses.

Far off, yet sharp and metallic, the noise of horses' hoofs sounded staccato in the evening air. His ears tense to locate the sound, Bush stood immobile, a hand raised cautioning his companions to silence. On past the ruined villa now thundered the racing hoofbeats. Momentarily he relaxed in relief. Then came sharply the realization that the pursuers were now between him and his necessary destination. The thought was short-lived. With an uncanny suddenness the sounds ceased. Somewhere beyond the gateposts the riders had reined their horses. Had they noticed the hoofmarks turning from the highway, or had they stopped to question some travelers along the way? The latter, probably. He recalled the almost continual flow of pedestrians to and from the city.

With a low cry of warning Bush caught his horse's bridle and, stumbling through the entwined creepers, ran toward the wide high doorway of the sugar mill. Huggett and Luke had also heard the sounds with instant appreciation of their significance.

Feeling with his foot, John crossed the threshold and the horse, hoofs clicking on the stone sill, followed. All around black walls shut out the world, but above, where once the roof had been, the sky offered a square of sapphire in which a few soft stars shone dim and distant. Through the door Huggett and Luke followed, and a minute later the horses were secured in a corner of the roofless room.

"Better take a look," Huggett suggested in a gruff whisper.

"Wait here with Luke. I will look down the drive." Before Huggett could reply, Bush had disappeared in the darkness.

It was only a few yards from the mill door to the open space at the end of the drive, but by the time Bush had reached a point from which he could look down through the avenue of palms there had occurred something that sent him stumbling back through the blackness to the two men who waited his return.

For, almost indistinct in the starlight, he had seen a movement at the avenue's end. —a movement that could be only the bodies of men and horses advancing slowly between the two files of palms.

"They're coming!" His voice was barely raised above a whisper.

He felt Huggett's hand on his shoulder and the touch gave him confidence. In the darkness Luke loomed monstrous, and that, too, reassured him.

The lock of Huggett's pistol snapped sharply to cock and with an inward smile Bush knew that Luke had drawn the wicked knife he invariably carried from its shark's skin sheath.

Intently they listened, nerves taut, eyes and ears straining for an indication of the enemy's approach. Somewhere among the rubble a cricket chirped shrilly, a tiny, sharp, sweet note. At the door Bush waited, his pistols grasped in either hand. Behind his back he heard Huggett's breathing, but Luke had become invisible, a grim specter swallowed by the engulfing night.

From the drive a shadowy shape appeared; others followed; four men on horseback, spectral and unreal. For a few seconds they stood motionless, apparently indecisive of their next step. Then a voice determined the reality of their presence. A man was speaking in hurried French. Bush could not hear the words.

IT WAS not unlikely that the four officers of Christophe's bodyguard who now rested their tired horses in front of the ruined villa, undecided how to proceed, might have retraced their steps to the highway and continued toward Le Cap, had not an unforeseen incident determined their immediate action. They had ridden long and hard, for Bush's escape and the disappearance of Pierre Nicholas had not been discovered as promptly as Bush had anticipated. In fact, the morning was well advanced before Christophe, desiring to continue his dictation to his new secretary, had made inquiry. Then in rapid succession came a bewildering mass of information. A soldier had seen two men climb the parapet and another soldier had seen Bush return alone. The officer of the guardroom, his face ashen with terror, told of the arrival of Nicholas and the solitary departure of Bush on horseback.

The lips of the king had drawn back from his pink gums with a snarl as he heard the faltering words, and his eyes grew red and small in the broad, black face. Of the officers who crowded the anteroom, there were four whom he called sharply by name. They would follow and bring back the fugitive. With a salute they acknowledged the command and in an instant were gone. The face of Christophe grew more composed; there was even a trace of a smile on the thick, red lips, for these four men whom he had dispatched could be relied upon; blood to them was less than water, and their cruelty was a byword even among men who had grown callous to atrocity; they were a product of the terrible school of Dessalines. The king was thinking of what might happen should the white man offer resistance, and the smile broadened.

These were they who sat in the starlight by the crumbling villa, and from the mill door the tense eyes of John Bush regarded them—uncanny, indefinable blotches that merged into the dense shadows of the night.

Small are the incidents that often turn the directions of men's affairs. Even as the four riders turned to retrace their way back through the avenue of palms the mount of the rearmost horseman, sensing with delicate nostrils the presence of a kindred spirit, gave a short ringing neigh. And like an echo answering from the roofless mill came the response from one of the tethered mares that Huggett had secured at Millot.

There was a quick movement of the horsemen, a scurrying of hoofs on the sod; the sound of bridles and spurs.

"*Les blancs!*" A voice spoke excitedly.

The horsemen were lost to view in the shadow of the trees as they charged toward the mill. Hoofs rattled on loose stones. Then a few yards distant in the darkness they halted.

"You will do well to surrender," called one of the four, in French.

"And you, gentlemen, will do even better to retire before I fire." The drawl which was so often noticeable in Bush's speech was pronounced, although he replied in the same tongue.

"It is he!"

A red spurt of flame and a crashing report cut the darkness, and a bullet flattened against the stone side of the doorway a few inches from Bush's cheek. Keen eyes had detected him, but his own eyes were no less active and in the flash of the pistol he had located one of the horsemen. Almost simultaneously his own pistol answered; there was an angry cry of pain, a rustling and thrashing in the bushes, and the sound of a horse circling wildly, followed by the diminishing clatter of its hoofs as it ran off down the drive.

With a rush the three who remained charged the doorway. There were curses and a wild thunder of hoofs, sharp urges to the horses, and then through the drifting pistol smoke Bush saw them above him in the huge doorway, broad black chests of horses, a tangle of hoofs that seemed to strike out at him, and above, leaning down over the straining necks of the horses, the red-coated bodies of the riders.

What happened in the brief interval that followed, Bush could never tell. He recalled a succession of blinding pistol shots and the crashing bodies of maddened horses as they crowded through the door. He remembered firing his second pistol squarely into a black face that leaned down toward him and in the quick glare he had seen Luke, his long knife imbedded in a red-coated breast, dragging down with his powerful arms his victim from the saddle. Then a heavy body struck him and carried him backward to the earth. Terrible hands tore at him and hot breath beat in his face. His arms strained and his fingers clutched a thick throat until the hot breath slackened. Something warm and wet flooded his face. Then the man's strength faded. With a final wrench Bush shook himself free and staggered to his feet. Above in the square of sky the stars shone brightly. He heard the horses uneasily moving in the blackness of the enclosure. Somewhere in the dark a man groaned and was still.

"CAPTAIN!" Huggett's voice, even and emotionless, broke the spell of the fearful silence with the single word.

"Here I am. Are you hurt?"

"No, sir, but there's a man apiece for us, and two for you, captain, counting the first one you got out in the bushes."

"Where's Luke?"

There was no answer but Bush saw the head of the negro against the sky, looking down into his face, and his hand reaching out felt the sinewy forearm. Then he heard Luke clucking in his throat. All was well!

With his flint and steel the negro caught a spark in a bit of lint torn from his ragged shirt; a few dry leaves, and then a tiny fire shone clear and yellow in the breathless air. By its light Bush saw the stone walls and the wide, black doorway. A few yards away the three riderless horses were cropping at the grass which thrust up between the stones, and on the floor, like crumpled bundles of rags, three red-coated bodies lay limp and motionless.

The moon was lifting, large and yellow, from the brightened east when Bush, Huggett, and Luke rode out from the avenue of palms and turned loose their former horses at the edge of the highway. Then riding the three horses they had taken from their prisoners, they turned to the right along the broad road to Le Cap.

When the hoofs of their horses clattered on the stone bridge at the outskirts of the town, not a light was visible. Wrapped in silence and darkness the city slept under the flood of moonlight. Riding abreast, they trotted slowly past the Champ de Mars where so recently beyond the prison walls Bush had waited for death at the muskets of the firing squad; past the cluster of thatched huts at the edge of the town; into the straight street that led along the harbor front. With anxious eyes he scanned the harbor. The riding lights of two vessels shone clearly. Fate at last seemed favoring; perhaps by one of these ships escape would be made possible.

A few turns and they reined in a square away from the house of Monsieur Samatan. All had been arranged. Huggett and Luke were to report to the merchant; alone Bush would ride to the house of Leroy Mangan, and, if possible, return to them with Virginie before dawn brightened the streets. To Samatan was to be left the decision whether they would remain concealed beneath his roof until a vessel made the harbor, or proceed immediately to the Mole St. Nicholas.

Alone on the deserted street, Bush urged his horse impatiently as he thought of his quest. At his side trotted a second horse, caught to his hand by its bridle. In silence Fort Picolet slumbered, the sentry at the gate unconcerned with the solitary horseman who rode so late. Beyond the turn he felt the cool breath of the sea. Then the horse followed the twisting road through the tunnel of overlapping trees. Loud the hoofs beat on the flooring of the bridge where so short a time before, a time that seemed so long ago, Bush had been separated, a captive, from her around whom his whole life now centered. The horses were panting and he slowed down to a walk and then climbed the hill. Beyond the next turn was the house of Leroy Mangan. There awaited the next vital episode; he wondered what might be the outcome. Then his thoughts turned to the next step beyond. Would it be a ship now in the harbor, or must the perilous flight be continued across the northern end of the island to the Mole? That was too far ahead to speculate. Sufficient was the problem at hand. Before him stood the white stone gateposts of the entrance to the estate of Leroy Mangan.

Just inside the gate, in the shade of the mangoes, he tethered the horses. Then cautiously treading the turf at the edge of the drive he advanced stealthily to the house. There were no lights. Through the leaves of the trees that surrounded it, the moon splashed the walls with mottled whiteness. Quickly he crossed an open space to the shadow of an acacia which stood beneath her window. The thought that she might not be there suddenly seized him. It could not be; where else could she be? Softly he whistled. The blank windows above him gave no sign. Again he trilled. Surely she would not sleep deeply with the terror of all that concerned her.

Then he saw her; her face was very white in the starlight. Over each shoulder her dark hair fell in heavy braids. A long, slender hand rested on the stone sill.

"I have come for you. Can you go with me now?"

He spoke very low but she caught his words through the rich silence. A finger rose to her lips.

"I shall come. Meet me at the gate."

THERE was no hesitation; no questioning. Implicitly she put her trust in him. Over Bush for the first time came a great awe, a tremendous sense of his responsibility. Into his precarious life this young girl was about to fling herself. What would the future bring? To him alone, little mattered. But with her, all things were vital. If the escape should fail—the consequences appalled him. Mangan aroused to wrath might be capable of action inconceivable. In his great love for Virginie, John Bush was tempted again to call her to the window and then with one last lingering memory of her face escape from the island, alone, forever. Nicholas was dead; her greatest danger was averted. His brain seemed incapable to decide. Then out of the frenzy of his thoughts came the recollection of her lingering lips; her voice again thrilled him, again he felt his arms around her yielding body. Stealthily he retraced his steps to the entrance to await her coming.

The horses munched the grass. Above the canopy of trees the sky seemed almost as bright as day. He leaned against the trunk of the mango. Then, restless, he paced back and forth in the gloom. His ears seized the silence to wring from it the slightest sound that might tell of the discovery of her flight. A mile away a dog bayed mournfully.

A faint grating of her feet as she crossed the graveled way, told him of her presence before he saw her. Beneath the sheltering tree they met. He could not see her face, for the long black mantle she wore completely covered her; but he felt it pressed against his own, her arms encircling his shoulders. For a long time they stood unable to break the spell that held them, then he gently disengaged her.

"We must go, beloved," he whispered. "No one could have heard you?"

"No one!"

Slowly the horses retraced the long winding road to the town. Then through back streets they followed a circuitous way until they stopped before the house of Monsieur Samatan. Already the street was pale with dawn. Hardly had they stopped before Luke stepped out from the arched doorway. Carefully Bush lifted Virginie from her horse, and together they entered the door which swung open as they reached it. Behind them they heard Luke leading off the horses.

As the door closed Bush found himself face to face with Monsieur Samatan. With a cry of pleasure the merchant caught his hand in both his own. Then he bowed to Virginie with sweeping grace.

"Welcome, my friends! It will always be my dearest memory that this long adventure should have ended beneath my roof."

At a round table on which were burning brightly a half-dozen candles, Huggett rose quickly from his chair and hurried to them.

"Captain!" The joy of his message almost prevented the words from forming on his lips. "A ship, sir, a Yankee ship, lies in the harbor and her captain sleeps tonight in the Hôtel de la République."

They sat down around the table and Samatan filled the glasses from a crystal decanter.

"In thanksgiving!" he said simply.

Silently they lifted their glasses.

"And now, my dear friend," Samatan continued, "you will restore to me the talisman."

FROM his finger Bush slipped the scarab ring and laid it on the polished tabletop. "You will perhaps explain," he queried, "what is this ring that you have at so much trouble placed upon my finger?"

Samatan smiled grimly. "Dessalines, the bloody one, wore it until a month before he died. How it came to me is a long story that must not be told. Enough to say that during his life it was his seal of death. The imprint of that strange insect authorized the death of one or hundreds, as the case might be. All men grew to fear it and all men know its meaning. Had he kept it, perhaps, he might live today."

In a flash Bush saw himself again on the parapet in the flood of morning light, the earth lying far beneath him. Again he felt the sword of Nicholas press him as he vainly tried to break through that invincible defense. Then he saw the glance of Nicholas fall on the ringed finger, saw his eyes start with terror, saw him retreat before it. Again he saw the black body falling, spinning through space, arms extended.

With awakened interest he handed the green-gray beetle to Monsieur Samatan. "So that is why he felt that death was inevitable," he said in a quiet voice.

The merchant nodded. "Monsieur Huggett has told me the story of the duel. It was the sight of the ring, monsieur, that rid the world of your enemy. It is that ring that has preserved you. Had the need arisen, the king himself would have hesitated to harm the wearer of the death seal of Dessalines."

Bush felt the fingers of Virginie's hand tighten about his elbow. He turned and saw her eyes, dark and luminous, misted with emotion. "Monsieur Samatan," he abruptly turned the trend of the conversation, "you have cheered us with the news of an American ship in the harbor. Her name, sir?"

The dark face of the merchant brightened with a smile. "It is good news, indeed, that I am able to tell you. She is the privateer brig *Chasseur* of Baltimore, Captain Thomas Boyle. This very afternoon we drank wine together, and in me, as a friend of all Americans, he confided that she returns from here to her home port after a most successful voyage during which many prizes have been taken." Samatan got up from his chair and brushed back the hangings from a window that opened to the garden. Dawn filled the room with opalescent light.

"Come here," he commanded. "We are near the warehouse where my boat is waiting. Let us be off before there is discovery of Mademoiselle's escape, before the unexpected can mar so glorious an adventure."

Bush put his hands on the merchant's shoulders. There was a tremble in his voice that none of those present had ever before heard.

"Monsieur Samatan," he said, "there are many things so deep that words can never do them justice—such is your friendship and the assistance you have given to us." He paused, apparently unable to proceed. Then: "You will incur danger? Will not misfortune be the reward for your friendship to us?"

Samatan picked up the ring from the table and slipped it on his finger. "I am a good citizen," he said dryly. "I supply the king with money, and"—he stretched out a black finger to one of the candles until they could plainly see the scarab gleaming dully in the light—"I wear the death ring of Dessalines."

A FINE breeze was cutting the blue ocean with flecks of snowy foam; whitecaps sparkled in the brilliant sunlight. Under full sail the privateer *Chasseur* was dropping fast behind her sinuous wake the green mountains of Santo Domingo, her bow pointed to the unbroken horizon of the Atlantic.

On the fantail John Bush and Virginie Goutier leaned against the weather rail and watched the island sink into the crystalline distance. With an impulsive movement Bush put his arm around the slender shoulders of the girl and drew her to him.

"Virginie," he whispered, "there is nothing that you regret? You are leaving there forever, to be forever mine!"

Her face was raised to his, and he saw that the dark eyes were wet with tears.

"John, dearest"—her voice was strong with the intensity of her emotion—"I love you!"

And again he felt her warm lips against his own.

THE END

Li Po *Comes to* New York

But It Takes a Young Compatriot of His to Discover Him in the Person of a Scottish-American Newspaper Man

By Gordon Malherbe Hillman

THE god was very great, so great that it split the heavens with its height. And it was none the less a god for being on the extreme tip of Manhattan Island. Li went down gray and roaring reaches of Broadway to worship it, his little jacket whipping in the harbor wind, and his flat face beaming like a golden moon.

It was a god among all gods, a ruler of the thunder and a wielder of weird lightnings, and when it relapsed into meditation, the sea mists came and hid its head. Its raiment was crystal and gold, sunset light bathed it raw red, dawn smoothed its surfaces into gorgeous and glowing purples, twilight found it lilac, noon a burnished shard of fire. There were no other gods like unto it.

It watched the shipping of the Seven Seas, saw red-pitted tramps and tankers slide down blue water to the wind-whipped roadsteads of the world, liners, cream and black and white and gold, ramping out on the Liverpool run with white at their sterns and smoke across their shoulders, bluff-bowed, mold-caked schooners setting sails against the sun, splendid for a little hour of their shabbiness, twisted rigging where the ships set sail for China seas. It was a great god, a god of all gods, and the personal god of Li.

The policeman yelled, "Watch it, Chinkie!" and waved his hand. Traffic slid by in a snarling stream. But Li stood on the gray walk, rubbed his small stomach ruminatively, and worshiped his god silently, as the great gods would wish. Wind caught at his coat of black; wind bellied his trousers; wind whipped dust across his face. But worshipers have little concern for such things, and Li was a Chinese Canterbury Pilgrim with no Chaucer to chronicle him in ringing rhyme. It was left for the policeman, who was a Killarney man and a Democrat, to do that.

"Divil a minute he moves, Mac," said he. "The small haythen stands and gowks at the Woolworth Buildin' belike it was one of these damn' stone idols I'm hearin' about. . . . Hey! Whaddya think you're after doin'?"

The gentleman in the Ford perspired freely and apologized. The sun struck Li's god with a shaft of gold. Opal lights played about it, dust eddied in the air. Mr. McGregor bade farewell to the policeman and went to look for his lunch.

Li had no lunch to look for. He lived in a packing-box in the rear of the residence of Ah Sin, who, if he did have some vague idea of Li's paternity, kept that fact severely to himself. At times he gave Li what might have passed for breakfast and dinner, but lunch was a fact far removed from his knowledge. So Li lived on scraps and—what was more important for his soul—the wisdom of Li Po the poet, as retailed by Ah Sin, who rolled sonorous syllables beneath a rat-tailed mustache, and sucked mystically at a mammoth pipe.

So in a way the wisdom of the world came to Li, through Li Po, the roisterer, the swaggerer, the adventurer, the François Villon of an old, old land that numbers its glories with the snows of yesteryear. Li Po the lover, Li Po the drunkard, Li Po the magnificent, Li Po the ragged exile, were all set in indelible memory inside Li's little head. And as he stood, he sang the

"Song of the Hills" very softly to his god.

Mr. McGregor drew alongside and spoke. "What ho, Chinaboy?" said he.

Now when Mr. McGregor was sober, which was seldom, he spoke in a broad Scotch burr, a tone that fairly tinkled with lochs and crags and glens and screes. Li had never heard such a language in all his life, and he worshiped it at once.

Mr. McGregor's nose was a rich cinnabar; his face was freely mottled. His yellow mustache was lion-like; his eyes were blue bits of china. He looked like Alan Breck, and all he needed was a sword-cut flaring white across his cheek and a belt full of pistols to be Sir Henry Morgan's mate, and a capable cutlass hand on a ship that flew the Jolly Roger and ranged the Spanish Main.

"IT IS," said Mr. McGregor, "a bonny bit of architecture, but not worth lookin' at the livelong day."

Li liked Mr. McGregor, but he was loyal to his gods. "You are," said he politely in language he had learned from a cross-eyed teacher to whom he served chop suey on occasion, "a person of immense discernment. It is a great god and I pray to it."

Now Mr. McGregor was a newspaper man, and the day before a little man with pinkish whiskers had been caught, photographed and carried away to Bellevue for kneeling in prayer before the statue of Civic Virtue. A China boy worshiping the Woolworth Building was even better copy.

"If you could come away for a minute," said he, stroking the mustache, and seeing the whole affair in headlines of brilliant black across a front page, "we might find a bit to eat. It has ever been my ain experience that gods are not pleased by owermuch worship."

So Li, held by a little yellow hand, and with his shiny black coat bellying in the wind more than ever, went trotting off to a restaurant where a scone was still a scone, despite the proximity of Vesey Street. He approved but did not understand this dainty, and he uncovered to the admiring Mr. McGregor the verse of Li Po, delivered with amazing volubility and very fair translation. He also recounted such of his history as he thought it was fit for a Caucasian and an innocent of forty-odd summers like Mr. McGregor to know, and finished up with a virulent volley of French oaths he had picked up from an Havre pilot's mate, who came to drink China wine and eat litchi nuts in the restaurant of Ah Sin.

Mr. McGregor was startled and stunned. He had thought in a vague and misty way that small Chinese urchins all spoke Mission English, and were acquainted with a smattering of biblical phrases, underbraced and founded, as it were, on the solid rock of Mott Street slang. But Li was a linguist in at least three tongues and spoke convincingly of an unknown oriental poet who was always drunk.

"Laddie," said Mr. McGregor, "ye knaw a braw lot of tongues."

"It is necessary," said Li tranquilly, rubbing the spot in his stomach where the scones might be supposed to be resting. "Men eat in many languages."

While Mr. McGregor considered this statement, and waggled his mustachios over it in a most enchanting way, they went across to the *Evening Earth*, whose building had a green golden dome, and needed a wash rather badly. There Li found himself faced with a battery of cameras, while Mr. McGregor asked him various and sundry questions, and then fell to torturing a typewriting machine that howled angrily and occasionally rang bells in its middle.

A man with a bald head like a peeled egg said, "There'll be sixty-five welfare societies after the kid tomorrow."

Mr. McGregor scowled. "There will not. He's mine. You'll shut your face, and you don't know where he is anyway."

"I s'pose," said the bald-headed man, sucking a pencil, "he can rush the suds for you, Mac. Or don't you ever drink anything but shellac?"

"You shut up!" said Mr. McGregor in a ducal way, and took Li home, as the presses went pounding out his story.

MR. McGREGOR lived on Sixty-eighth Street because he liked the country: that is to say, Sixty-eighth Street was the kind of country Mr. McGregor liked. Li considered his two rooms and bath the most remarkable and spacious apartment he had ever seen. He thought it was a waste of space that Mr. McGregor had not a large family of brothers to live with him.

"There's a chicken somewhere," said Mr. McGregor, kicking aside newspapers, and stepping on a blue-dotted necktie, "and marmalade, and a piece of bread. How d'you like it, Li?"

"It is of a vast size," said Li, putting a chubby thumb to his nose, and rubbing that organ, "but more dirty than the devil."

He picked up a shirt that was sulking in a corner, and tripped over a monthly magazine and a desk lamp that Mr. McGregor had put on the floor because it annoyed him. Mr. McGregor fished valiantly under the flowery sofa, and reappeared with a bottle and a glass.

"Skoal!" he said, and drank.

Li admired the working of his Adam's apple, and the apparent length of the draught. More and more Mr. McGregor reminded him of the poet, Li Po.

"I am thinking of cleaning it," said Mr. McGregor, diving bodily into a closet that served as kitchenette, "next month or so."

He brought out the chicken and set it on a chair. Then he proceeded to carve it. Li watched in agony for a few moments, and then took it away from him. He had decided that Mr. McGregor needed a firm hand, and the firmer the better.

Mr. McGregor rubbed his eyes, and said sadly: "And I ne'er thought that any one could carve a chicken. Can you cook too, laddie?"

"I shall cook for you," observed Li, completing the carving, "a great deal. It must be very bad for you to live on such things. Ah Sin has often said that Americans are all heathens, but with stomachs of solid brass, which the mercy of the gods has given them."

So Mr. McGregor, who had nourished vague ideas of adopting Li, found himself adopted, and all objections swept away. Ah Sin, as Li observed sagely, would wonder only a little, and care not at all, and as the great gods had clearly indicated that Li was to be bondslave to Mr. McGregor, there was nothing else to say in the matter.

Mr. McGregor could not speak three languages and quote lines from long dead poets, and was too overwhelmed to argue the matter. He sat sipping Scotch whisky and watching Li sew on his shirts.

"It is my opinion," said Li sagely, biting a thread, "that you are the poet, Li Po, born into the world once more. He also drank a great deal more than was good for him."

So the sixty-five benevolent societies were thwarted next day when they attempted to discover the whereabouts of the little China-boy, who prayed to buildings and lived in a packing-box. Mr. McGregor swore in good broad Scotch that Li had disappeared, and so ingeniously spun fiction that the secretaries of the sixty-five societies went straight away, clutching their copies of the *Evening Earth*, and convinced that Mr. McGregor was a scholar, a gentleman, and a teller of the truth.

AT THIS time, Li was bowing down to Mr. McGregor's bathtub. It was the only thing in the apartment that had not newspaper clippings and soiled clothes strewn about it, and Mr. McGregor had suggested airily, over an egg, that it might be used for washing purposes. Li doubted this severely. It was altogether too awe-inspiring a structure to be used lightly by a little and insignificant Chinaboy with a lemon-yellow skin. There was also a god who gurgled when one let the water out, and made noises of disapproval. Li feared the god, but he had faith in Mr. McGregor, and took a bath at great personal risk, rendering the tub rather dingy, and Li quite clean. He regarded it dreamily as the turning-point of his life, and quoted some verses of Li Po's, uttered when that ingenious gentleman, suffering from over much saki and other things, had fallen overboard into the Hoang-Ho and been fished out feet first and full of water. They seemed to suit the situation very well.

Then he set to work on Mr. McGregor's socks, which needed it. He had never known that so many socks existed, or that it was possible to wear such holes in them. But Mr. McGregor, he decided, was a genius to whom all things were possible. This done, he disappeared in a cloud of dust, which presently lifted to show a very disheveled little Chinaboy, some seven shades darker, with a pigtail hanging almost to his heels, and black trousers burdened with the dust of centuries. The apartment, itself, had an air of having waked up like the castle in the story of the Sleeping Beauty, and looked quite bright and almost clean. Even the woodwork was a shimmering miracle, and all Mr. McGregor's ties were safe in an upper drawer.

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1924

At the conclusion of this volcanic eruption, which Mr. McGregor had viewed with awe and alarm for the better part of a month, Li tied up his pigtail, and went shopping. Mr. McGregor had given him money, which it was foolish to spend in large quantities. He knew all about money, because he had never had any.

He served Mr. McGregor chicken chow mein, and chop suey, and a number of other dishes, of which Mr. McGregor never comprehended either the names or the contents. Since the cleaning of the apartment that gentleman looked upon him with more awe than ever, and took him for a walk in the Ramble, where Li discussed gravely the publicity of Anglo-Saxon love as exhibited by the park.

THESE entertainments were interspersed by rather startling Saturday nights when Mr. McGregor arose to immense heights, and got drunk. This was intensely interesting, because he told Scotch stories of spray-swept skerries and bleak-faced hills, sang Scotch songs, and ended up by trolling "Annie Laurie," and taking himself to bed with his boots on.

It was at about this time that Mr. McGregor lost his job. Li had never considered the possibility of this seriously, because the poet, Li Po, when very drunk at court functions, could always be relieved by water poured over his head, and would proceed to turn out sonnets, rondels, ballads and bits of lyric verse by the bale. It was said that he wrote best in such situations.

Apparently Mr. McGregor did not.

Li knew that the world had gone awry when the lord and master of his soul came home quite sober and began to sing "Ani Yori" in a soft, Scotch voice. Li had never understood the sentiment of the song, but it made him want to curl up in a corner and howl. Despite this he liked it a good deal.

"Laddie," said Mr. McGregor, flinging his hat across the room, "we hae lost oor job." He looked very tired and very old, and not at all like a bold-hearted buccaneer.

"The gods," said Li, "will doubtless provide." And he picked up the hat.

But Mr. McGregor sank down on the sofa, and held his head in his hands. "It's verra hard," he whispered, "but I must e'en let you go. There's no money, and no education and no things fit for a lad. Ye'll no be sorry perhaps that the Society is goin' to call for you in the mornin'."

But Li was only a boy, and a small boy. He put his dingy little fists into his eyes and began to cry. "Lord and master of my soul," he sobbed, "do not send me away. Me, Li, I can work for you, or I can beg food from Ah Sin. Only do not send me away with the lady mission devils."

Mr. McGregor wiped his eyes hastily. "But no, laddie. I hae drinkit a' oor money up, being no more than a black beastie. The ladies'll look after you, Li. They're good folk."

He looked at the sobbing mite in front of him. "Suppose," he said softly, "sin' it's to be oor last evenin', you come sit on my knee a bit."

The mission lady, who came next morning, was a hawk-faced young lady with horn spectacles. She told Mr. McGregor she had been educated at Vassar, and Li hated her on sight. Li Po of the rose-lipped dancing girls would not have liked her either, and possibly this gave Li courage to dart out of the door, and down the steps like a yellow demon.

It is doubtful if Mr. McGregor assisted the mission lady much in pursuit. But of course he was a perfect gentleman, and could not go out of a door before a woman. Thus it was that Li, with his eyes popping and his pigtail all astream, caromed around the corner of Sixty-sixth Street, and charged down into the subway. He was bound for the god of all gods, the god of ultimate attainment, the personal god of Li.

The great god shimmered into gray mist. Its flanks were faintly amethyst, its lower buttresses glowing pearl. Its head was high above the clouds, and by this sign Li knew it was displeased with him. He stood and shivered in the fog. High above him the shaft shot into gray and wreathing space. A whistle moaned from the river.

Mr. McGregor's trousers were too big for him, and he was very forlorn. Even if Li had escaped the mission devil, the master of his soul would have nothing to eat, and no money with which to drink. He would never again sing "Ani Yori" and have to be dragged to bed. This was the saddest thought of all. Li, who was very, very small indeed, began to weep.

Destiny swerved into Broadway and came rolling down on rubber tires. It was great and gorgeous and maroon and a motor-car of the most expensive make. Li looked up at the god, and the great god scowled and hid its head He knew then what was necessary. There was only one way to appease a god, and that was a sacrifice. A white fowl would do for an ordinary god, but this was a god above all gods. Yet Mr. McGregor must be saved from the serene anger of the deity.

He slithered off the walk into the street, still gazing at his god. And in that one swift moment, Destiny dashed upon him. Li went out like a snuffed candle, and the maroon motor-car came to a stop above a little figure in Mr. McGregor's cast-off trousers.

HE WOKE up to find himself in a room of vast whiteness. It reminded him a great deal of Mr. McGregor's bathtub. His eyes were very bleary and not at all to be trusted, but presently he made out a dark-eyed lady with hair done in the black smoothness of a geisha girl.

"*Mamma mia!*" she said softly. "He is waking up."

Li disapproved of ladies who used strange languages. He wondered where his trousers might be, and what had happened to Mr. McGregor. His legs felt very stiff and tired, and he looked again at the lady. She had a softly Slavic face, and was a great opera singer, but of course Li could not know that.

"Little boy," said the lady suddenly, "would you like to come and live with me?"

Now Li should have emphatically disapproved of the lady at once. By a masterly process of deduction, he had reasoned that it was her personal devil of a motor-car that had run him down, and she had called him "little boy." Li was anything but a little boy: he was the guardian of Mr. McGregor's stomach and soul, and a man of knowledge besides. As a matter of fact, he liked the lady very much.

He told the truth simply. "I must take care of Mr. McGregor. He is the lord and master of my soul, and he has no job."

The lady rouged her lips with such an air that it seemed that Li Po might have written a poem about her in his time. "Oh, yes, he has!" she said. "You have been—how would you say?—dead to the world for sixteen hours, and I have heard all about you. I have made Mr. McGregor my publicity person. *Si?*"

Li polished his stomach in pure joy. Whatever the lady might be, she was not a mission devil, and a publicity person sounded like a job. Still, all sides of the question must be taken care of.

"Mr. McGregor has many bottles," said Li tactfully. "When he drinks of them, he is very beautiful and most merry."

THE lady waved her hand, and said something in Italian. Li perceived that he would have to learn a new language to keep up with this fascinating individual. However, she manifestly did not object to Mr. McGregor's skyrocket Saturday nights. He concluded that after all, he would live with her—a little. He would enjoy riding in the personal devil of a motor-car. Probably Mr. McGregor would be riding in it, too. A publicity person sounded important.

Outside, bright lights blinked in. A pillar of patchwork gleams rose straight into dusky skies. The god, the great god, the personal god of Li, winked pleasantly and went on with its business. He breathed ecstatically.

"I have a great sleepiness," he said, clutching the lady's hand in his, and reflecting on the greatness of the gods. "Would you sing me 'Ani Yori' a little? Of course you would not do it as well as Mr. McGregor when he is drunk; but you might try."

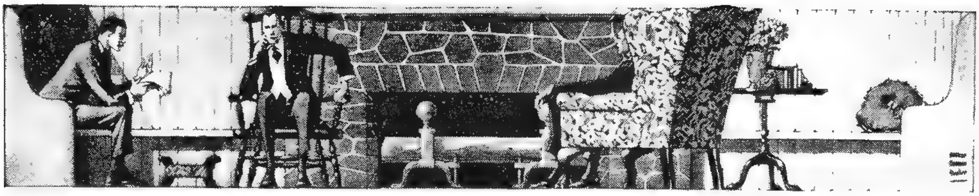
The great singer dabbed at her eyes with a square of yellow handkerchief, and drew breath to sing.

Far from the street below came a raucous roar, a swirl and skirl of Scotch syllables, rioting from a raw Scotch voice. Mr. McGregor had heard of Li's recovery and he was singing:

"Ma-axwelton braes are bonnie-e
Where early fa's the dew,
And it's there that Annie Laurie
Gi'ed me . . ."

A patter of protest sounded from below. A Killarney accent accused some one of being "droonk an' disorderly." A wild roar of words rioted through the silent street. Li smiled placidly: all was well in his world. . . . Mr. McGregor was being led away to the lock-up.

Everybody's Magazine, August, 1924



Everybody's Chimney Corner

Where Reader, Author and Editor Gather to Talk Things Over

BACK in December, 1910, there appeared in EVERYBODY'S a little story of two thousand words by Elizabeth Newport Hepburn about which the author still receives letters. We won't predict about the life of "Mad Money" (page 9), but we will say that it is a good story. In introducing herself to *Chimney Corner* Mrs. Hepburn writes:

I am one of those unfortunates who always yearned for print with the besotted egoism which attacks adolescence. To live in New York and write stories for magazines—this was the secret dream of a long-legged girl living in Washington many years ago. It was along about the time that one still sat on the floor in the garret and read battered copies of old family books—"Quits" and "The Initials" and "Eveline" and a torn but adored copy of "Jane Eyre." Then, for one eager youngster, came a great day when she shared the divine afflatus with all those wonderful "real writers." A kindly editor printed some verses of hers in his country newspaper—a truly magnificent event! Later came a weekly column about art and artists, not merely printed but paid for, and appearing each week in a Washington newspaper. However, this splendid achievement was sadly dimmed by the fact that a students' magazine called *The Corcoran Art Journal*, with E. E. Newport as editor, was so badly proof-read on one occasion that certain austere officials of the Corcoran Gallery of Art threatened to suppress publication!

SOME years later, when the long legs of the little girl were chastely covered by discreet petticoats and trailing skirts, when marriage had changed her name and her dwelling-place, she actually came to New York and began to write for the magazines. However, it took rather a long time for the said magazines to recognize this fact! Then, at last, the consummate joy of those early checks! The day that there came from the *Red Book* forty dollars for a short story! A year or so later a little essay of mine appeared in the *Atlantic* unsigned, but none the less an achievement. I still have the bookshelves sprung from the modest proceeds of that essay! Other small successes encouraged me: sales to various of the woman's magazines, a story to the *Outlook*, a poem appearing in the New York *Times* which brought me a photograph and a charming letter from the Spanish painter, Sorolla. But compared with the annals of really prosperous authors, mine are modest indeed; and yet I have sometimes wondered whether there may not be compensations in the fact that the writer who sometimes fails gets a richer reaction when a particular book or story actually "gets over." There is even something stimulating about rewriting a story which has been rejected more than once, and putting into the creature at last something warm and living, something that finally allures a superior editor who has seemed to represent the inaccessible peak.

THE life of H. De Vere Stacpoole ("Passion Fruit," page 142) has been extraordinarily varied; it has brought him in touch with all sorts and conditions of men, more especially sailor men, and all sorts and conditions of ships, from the North Sea fishing-boat to the cable layer and ocean tramp.

Mr. Stacpoole is an Irishman hailing from County Clare; he is also a doctor of medicine, an English magistrate and a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and an author who has sold over a million copies of one book—"The Blue Lagoon"; he ripped up the Congo of Leopold of Belgium in his book "The Pools of Silence" and has translated the poems of François Villon and the verses of Sappho—a tiny volume of which is on the shelves of the Queen of England's Dolls' House Library.

RECENTLY, in introducing Elsa Barker ("Apartment 4 D," page 29), the chairman of a club meeting said something like this:

It is difficult to label Elsa Barker, because she has been interested in so many things, has lived in so many places, and written so many different *kinds* of books. The fiction writers claim her because of her two long novels; the poets claim her because of her three volumes of poetry; the occultists claim her because of that series of books, "Letters from a Living Dead Man" and "Songs of a Vagrom Angel"; and the psychoanalysts claim her because of her recent psychoanalytic novel, "Fielding Sargent," etc.

Of herself Mrs. Barker says:

I do not know how much "claiming" of me there may be by these various groups, but three countries have claimed me as a resident in tax-paying seasons —England, France and the United States, and I remember being included in one census in Algeria. However, in these days of universal travel, I have never thought of myself as a real traveler. Ten countries are all I have seen, and fifty to sixty thousand miles would cover my wanderings, so far. Before I became a writer I was a teacher; and I have been a law reporter, a free lance journalist, and an editor. It is only recently that I have become fascinated with the short story, which seems to me the most fascinating of all forms of writing. It would be reckless, maybe, to say that I want to write short stories for the rest of my life—but I feel that way now. To my mind, the short story is an art form, in a degree in which the novel never can be. At its best, it is a narrow little window opening on a wide vista. Its technical difficulties are a part of its charm. My view of it may be influenced by the three or four hundred sonnets I have written. Within its narrow frame, as in the sonnet, it is possible to reach perfection. I know a few short stories—not many, but a few—in which no word could be removed or changed without marring the effect, stories in which the characters and their crises are as perfectly *revealed* as they could be in novels of a hundred thousand words. It is my dream to write sometime a story of that kind.

KARL W. DETZER ("Mademoiselle Meddlesome," page 22) was a member of the American Secret Service in France just after the war. Then he returned home to northern Michigan.

Here on the shore of the lake [he writes] where a broad meadow rises toward the pine-covered hills, there is a sound of hammering in the days and of typewriters by night. For we are building our house here, between the pines and the water, with a birch wood at one side. Thirty miles away is a city, where there are news stands and soda fountains (no street cars), a movie theater, and all the bustle of a town of ten thousand people. And on our infrequent pilgrimages to that town, we have the same thrill that once upon a time I knew when I stepped out of the Gare Mont-Parnasse and took the Metro to the Grands Boulevards. Which proves that it's all a matter of viewpoint and environment. My work in France enabled me to know cities as well as I know the woods here at my door. Each has its advantages—for our own part we prefer this life on the edge of the wilderness, where the only sounds are the noises of wind and water, and the occasional cry of a hoot owl across the night.

ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY ("The Accusing Silence," page 77) says she has had no experience more thrilling than writing books while bringing up a family.

One of the questions which I am most often asked [she says] is: "Do you find marriage and the possession of children a drawback to the writing of books?" One would almost be tempted to reply: "How can a woman write books without marriage and the possession of children?" Only that can hardly meet the case since so many women can—and do. At the same time it would seem that experiences which mean fulfilment of so much in woman can hardly be looked upon as handicaps in a profession which demands, above all things, understanding of life. If one were to revise the question and ask, "Is writing of books a drawback to marriage and the possession of children?" my answer would be briefly "No." One does not write so many books perhaps, but, noting the length of publishers' lists, that can hardly be considered a drawback.

NATURALLY, where there are children, a woman has infinitely less time for any kind of professional work than a man. This fact she must frankly face if there is to be no confusion of values. But I believe it is equally true that every woman may discover a varying surplus of time which she may fairly appropriate for her own. The person who has never a moment to spare is likely to be a person terribly extravagant with minutes—throwing them away, even! Certainly when children are small it is difficult to reserve a definite place and definite hours for writing. Children are the least stable things in nature and hard and fast rules are impossible until they, too, are captive of regular hours of study. There can be no locked doors or attics with stuffed keyholes when any moment some terrible childish catastrophe may cause the universe to quake. The utmost that one can do at that stage is to explain that "a person has some writing to do" and to dilate feelingly upon the advantages of quiet in the near vicinity. The audience will usually be sympathetic and full of promises. But one must not be surprised when a small knock comes to the door and a thrilling whisper demands permission to "just sit, quiet as anything, and read." The intentions of the petitioner are so virtuous that to refuse seems churlish; so, walking carefully on tiptoe, he (or she) comes softly in and sits down upon the little rocking-chair which squeaks ("just like a weenty kitty, mother—don't you *like* it?") The "reading" book (known by heart) is opened and you return to your desk. But presently a small, far-away voice begins, "Once upon a time there were three little bunnies, Floppy, Mopsy—"

"But, my dear, how can a person write while you are reading that lovely story?"

A thoughtful pause, punctuated by squeaks, and then:

"Can't you write while I'm turning the pages?"

After all, when they are little, it comes, more or less, to that; one writes between the turning of the pages—any time—and presently the intervals grow longer.

For the rest—I was born in Ontario, but have lived for the last ten years largely on the western

Robert Simpson ("Or Not at All," page 66) demonstrates what can be done in the way of a family in a New York apartment house.

Thirty miles from the movies, Karl W. Detzer ("Mademoiselle Meddlesome," page 22) tries his hand at house-building by day, story-building by night.

Elizabeth Newport Hepburn (see page 9) returns to the field of a former triumph.

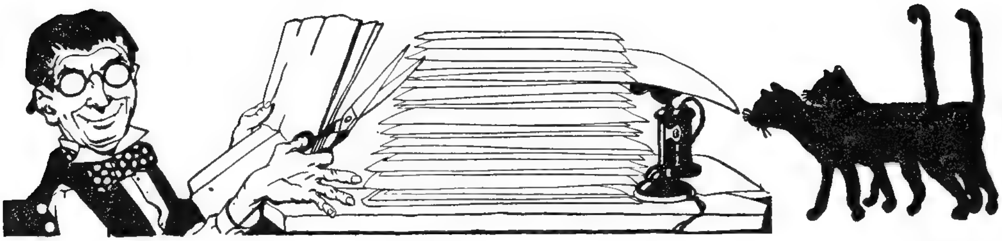
Isabel Ecclestone Mackay (see page 77), successful combination of fisherman, home-maker and author.

Elsa Barker, author of a corking mystery story of New York (see page 29).

coast, spending most of the year in Vancouver, British Columbia, and the summers at Boundary Bay, Point Roberts, Washington.

ROBERT SIMPSON ("Or Not At All," page 66) writes to *Chimney Corner* as follows:

I was born in Strathy, on the northernmost coast of Scotland, October 12, 1886. My father was the schoolmaster there. When he died in 1893, the family moved to Thurso and thence to Glasgow, where I went to public school and to business until I was eighteen, when I set sail for West Africa. There, on the Niger River, I helped a trading firm make money and gathered a lot of material for the stories of West Africa I began to write at that time and have been writing, on and off, ever since. Then, in 1907, I left West Africa, returned to Glasgow, and a few months later came to New York, where in addition to several other things I have been principally an editor and an author in real earnest. In addition to West African stories of adventure I have written stories of American business, and Scotch Highland character stuff. I am married and have three more or less well grown youngsters.



Prose *and* Worse, *by* Gridley Adams

DO YOU BELIEVE IN SIGNS?

In Monongahela, Pa.: "*Dr. P. G. Toothman, Dentist.*"
In Rochester, Ind.: "*Gott and Son, Funeral Directors.*"
In Melrose Park, Chicago: "*Bust Sisters, Well-Fitting Brassieres.*"
On faculty of Chicago Dental College: "*Dr. Jirka.*"
In Ottawa, Ill.: "*Miss Gospel, Chapel Street.*" (The house is owned by a Mr. Godfrey, and next door lives Mrs. Pray.)
In Gary, Ind.: "*Dr. Eurit, Dentist.*" (Not on your life!)
In Brandy, Va.: "*Miss Ruby Wine.*"

(*East Lynn Evening Item*)

A middle-aged man, wearing dark clothes, a broad-brimmed hat and a long mustache, has been peeping into the windows of the Old Ladies' Home, 37 Breed Street, late at night. (MRS. E. S. L'R.)

Everybody happy?

(*Fortsville news in the Saratogian*)

Mrs. John Walkup entertained Mrs. Herbert Leggett of South Glens Falls on Thursday.

Wait for me on the landing so I can catch my breath.

(*Philadelphia Inquirer*)

WEATHER FOR WEEK

Generally Fair and Coal is Predicted For This Region. (F. H. M.)

Where a Pinchot coal goes a long weighs.

(*Yonkers Statesman*)

Miss L. M. Reade, ancient, history teacher in the Yonkers High School, has moved from South Yonkers to her new home on Park Avenue Terrace. (F. C. L.)

The disrespectful Statesman.

(*Bloomsburg, Pa., Press*)

If the person who so kindly warned me through the mail about my husband and another woman will call at my home I will give them the names of seven others—so why worry about one more?—L. M. S. (B. F. R. AND I. C. Y.)

Line forms on this side.

(*Hartford Times*)

A fine exhibit of the work of Miss Wilson's pottery class at the Hartford Art School is being shown in the window of Moyer's art store on Pratt street. The exhibit is composed of bowels and vases and is attracting much notice and favorable comment. (G. G. B.)

I just can't stomach exhibits.

(*Fashion note*)

Paris dressmakers have moved the waistline.

Bet *my* arm would find it, wher*ever* it is.

(*New York Tribune*)

RENTS HAVE REACHED PEAK

Yes, and soon they'll be over the tops of the chimneys.

(*Auburn, N. Y.*)

POKER GAME RAIDED—ASSISTANT U. S. ATTORNEY TAKES A HAND. (J. H. K.)

And he probably had a coupla aces up his sleeve.

(*Springfield, Mass., Republican*)

Miss Etta O'Connell of 43 Stebbins street has resigned her position as buyer of the millinery department of the Women's Shop. She had been connected with the concern for the past three and a half years. Miss O'Connell received a substantial check from the company and an overnight bag containing a necklace and ear-rings from her associates. (MRS. D. W. M.)

She'd better not try to sleep in a draught.

Copyright, 1924, *by Gridley Adams.*

(Show-card in Senorita Frock Co., Washington, D. C.)

DAINTY AND SMART
HAND MADE INFANTS
& Children's Garments.

(MISS G. M. B.)

Ain't science just grand?

(Bethany, Mo., Clipper)

Mesdames G. C. Zingerle, E. S. Miner, Elizabeth Kinne, E. M. Crossan and L. M. Crossan issued invitations last week to a large number of their friends for a bridge luncheon to be at the Zingerle home Friday at 1 o'clock. A very elaborate and delicious menu was served cafeteria style and the ladies found their places at daintily set quartette tables. About forty guests were present for the afternoon party. After the luncheon, the clothes were removed and the remainder of the afternoon was spent in playing auction bridge. (A. R. A.)

Where were the police?

(Limelight, Texas)

Coy Trout was in Monday from northeast of here trading and shaking hands with Busy Town friends.

But nobody was able to get their hooks into him.

(Women's Wear)

SKUNK REGAINS STRENGTH AT LOCAL AUCTION. (I. E. M.)

Why not let bad enough A-LONE?

(Bloomsburg, Pa., Press)

On account of many requests "One Exciting Night" will be run continuously To-day and To-morrow.

Where good times are scarce.

(Fresno, Calif., Bee)

WANTED—Two reliable young men to board and room in private family that will share same room. Inquire 2957 Iowa Ave. Phone 6666-W. (F. C.)

Please ask that goldfish to look the other way.

(Trenton Times)

Born, Feb. 20, to Mr. and Mrs. Placid Mule, of 405 South Clinton Avenue, a daughter. (MRS. C. A. G.)

Come, Jenny, *Jenny,* JENNY?

(Item in Grayling, Mich., Avalanche)

Mr. and Mrs. Paul Lovelly are the proud parents of a baby boy born to them yesterday morning. You may be next! Why don't you buy some fire insurance? GEO. L. ALEXANDER & SON.

That certainly *would* help some.

(Grand Rapids Furniture Record)

Furniture business in the busiest Central California town of 11,000. County seat and third richest county agriculturally in California. Drawers on 50,000 population. Wonderful opportunity to expand. (MRS. J. B. H.)

Expand? Why, man, with four pair on I wouldn't be able to even *sit!*

(Sign in a Buffalo rooming-house)

Positively no washing of any kind done in this bathroom. (MRS. N. P. J.)

Boy, put the tub out on the back stoop tonight, and fill 'er up.

(Visalia, Calif., Delta)

WANTED—Live stock hauling; also old horses for chicken feed. Phone 418-J. (J. E. A.)

Here, waiter, take back this chicken, and bring me some fish instead.

(Beloit News)

The parties who have been conducting series of spooning matches along the private driveway of a farm near Beloit will avoid certain publicity by playing the game elsewhere.

Let me see, whose deal is it now?

(Waukegan church notice)

The Annual Twilight Sand Picnic and Love Party of the fortnightly Club and its guests begins on Tuesday evening at 6.15 at Genessee and Washington Sts.

He, ho, and a coupla hums.

(Wheaton, Ill., Illinoisan)

Mrs. Robert Salisbury entertained at a bathroom shower in honor of Miss Edna Deane on Wednesday afternoon.

Oh, splash!

(Altoona Times)

Miss Irene Shaw, the well-known nurse of Hollidaysburg, is attending Mrs. J. Davis of Crawford Avenue, who gave birth to a young son on Wednesday at 2.30 P.M. Mother and son are getting along fine.

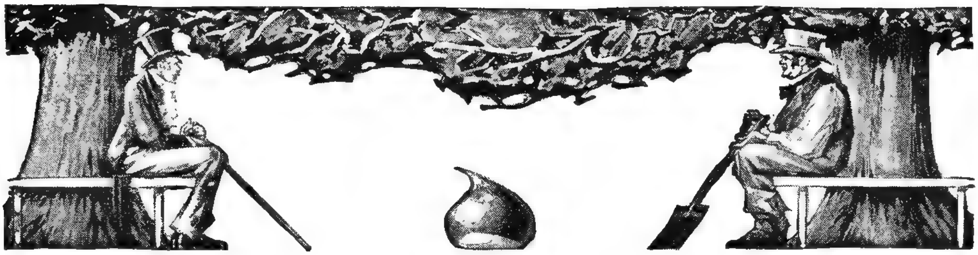
It was some entertainment that was offered, there being several highly unusual features.

Yes, his clear soprano tones were heard all over the house.

(Kenyon, Minn., Leader)

She was attended by her sister, Miss Laura Westermo, as maid of honor, who wore pink boils with pink lace overdrape.

The p. l. o. certainly added a delicate touch.



Everybody's Chestnut Tree

EDITOR'S NOTE: Though the sign is the Chestnut Tree, no story is barred by its youth. We will gladly pay for available ones. Address all manuscripts to "The Chestnut Tree," enclosing stamped addressed envelope.

AN OLD negro was brought into a police station charged with vagrancy.

"Law, mistah, I ain't no vagrant! I's a hahd-wukkin, religious man. Look at dose!" And he pointed proudly to the large patches ornamenting the knees of his trousers. "I got dem f'om prayin'!"

"How about the patches on the seat of your breeches?" asked a policeman.

The negro looked sheepish for a moment, then:

"I reckon Ah must have got dose backslidin'," he said.

MISTRESS: What beautiful scallops you have on your pies, Mandy! How do you do it?

COOK: 'Deed, honey, dat ain't no trouble. I jes' uses my false teeth.

"DID yez see this, Mike? It says here that whin a mon loses wan av his sinses, his other sinses git more developed. F'r instance, a blind mon gits more sinse av hearin', an' touch, an'—"

"Sure, an' 'tis quite true. Oi've noticed it meself. Whin a mon has wan leg shorter than the other, begorra, the other leg's longer!"

"WHAT makes you think the baby is going to be a great politician?" asked the young mother anxiously.

"I'll tell you," answered the young father confidently. "He can say more things that sound well and mean nothing at all than any youngster I ever saw."

"WELL, Sandy," said the laird, "you are getting very bent. Why don't you stand up straight like me, man?"

"Eh, man, do you see that field of wheat over there?"

"I do," returned the laird.

"Ah, well, you'll notice that the full heads hang down, an' the empty ones stand up."

A NERVOUS woman pointed to a soaring airplane and exclaimed to an Irishman:

"Mustn't it be dangerous to be up there with that airplane?"

"It would be worse to be up there without it, ma'am," said Pat.

AN OLD yokel saw a motorcar for the first time in his life. It came dashing up the main street, and disappeared in a cloud of dust.

"Well," said the yokel, "the horses must have been goin' a good speed when they got loose from that carriage."

THERE was company for luncheon and small Elizabeth had been instructed to be as quiet as possible and not to interrupt the grown-ups' conversation with her remarks. She sat in dutiful silence, accepting what was set before her with little apparent satisfaction but with no audible protest, until the hot roll upon her plate threatened to grow cold unbuttered.

Her patience at an end, she inquired with cold dignity, "Well, am I s'posed to eat this thing raw?"

THE deputy warden of the penitentiary was looking over the new arrivals. Among them was a tall, forlorn-looking gentleman of color who seemed to take it very hard, sighing so deeply that the deputy asked:

"What's the matter, boy?"

"Mah sentence, suh!" was the mournful reply. "Ah, cain't do all this heah time the jedge done gib me!"

"How much are you doing?" inquired the deputy.

"Life!" exclaimed the new arrival.

"Well," remarked the deputy, not unkindly, "just do what you can of it."

OLD Hen Roddy, from Hogskin Hollow, is fond of boasting of his amazing thriftiness, by virtue of which he has accumulated a fairly substantial bank account.

"You're very careful about your expenditures, aren't you, Uncle Hen?" the village schoolmaster asked one day.

"Yes, perfesser, I'm right smart thataway. Fact, I don't recollec' that I ever spent but one quarter fer jist dern foolishness. That was when I let a storekeeper talk me into buyin' a pair o' socks."

RASTUS was sporting proudly a new shirt when a friend asked: "Boy, how many yards does it take for a shirt like that?"

Rastus replied: "Say, man, Ah got three shirts like this outa one yard last night."

"I'M counting on the support of every honest man and woman in the city," asserted the candidate to a group of his friends.

"An' not only that," whispered Pat confidentially, "but ye'll get the vote of ivery Oirishman in the sixth ward."

SKINNEM had invented a new hair restorer, and had sent a large number of sample bottles out to various well known people in the hope of obtaining some testimonials for advertising purposes.

"I don't know whether to publish this testimonial or not," he said to a friend who was calling upon him as he was opening the letters.

"What does it say?" inquired the other.

"Well, it says," replied the proud inventor, " 'Before I used your hair restorer I had three bald patches. Now I have only one.' "

MY LITTLE cousin Grace was visiting us for a few days. When her mother came to take her home she took her on her lap and asked:

"Weren't you lonesome, and didn't you miss your mamma?"

Grace answered: "No. Aunt Emily can boss you like everything."

THE teacher was trying to give her pupils an illustration of the word "perseverance."

"What is it," she asked, "that carries a man along rough roads and smooth roads, up hills and down hills, through jungles and swamps and raging torrents?"

There was a silence, and then Tommy, whose father was an auto dealer, spoke up.

"Please, miss," he said, "there ain't no such car."

A COLORED soldier was walking post for the first time in his life. A dark form approached him. "Halt!" he cried in a threatening tone. "Who are you?"

"The officer of the day."

"Advance!"

The O.D. advanced, but before he had proceeded half a dozen steps the dusky sentinel again cried "Halt!"

"This is the second time you've halted me," observed the O.D. "What are you going to do next?"

"Never you mind what Ah's gonna do. Mah orders are to call 'Halt!' three times, den shoot."

A WASHINGTONIAN who was a friend of the great humorist says that Mark Twain once sat in the smoking-room of a steamer and listened for an hour to some remarkable stories.

"Boys," he drawled, "these feats of yours recall an adventure of my own in Hannibal. There was a fire one night, and old man Hankinson got caught in the fourth story of the burning house. None of the ladders was long enough to reach him. The crowd stared at one another with awed eyes. Nobody could think of anything to do. Then all of a sudden, boys, an idea occurred to me. 'Fetch a rope!' I yelled.

"Somebody fetched a rope, and with great presence of mind I flung the end of it up to the old man. 'Tie her around your waist!' I yelled. Old man Hankinson did so, and I pulled him down."

Beware of Fat

DO you know whether you weigh too much or too little? If your weight is just right, congratulate yourself. Probably not one person in ten knows what his proper weight should be nor realizes how important it is to maintain that weight.

What is the right weight? Experts who have studied the subject of weight in its relation to health tell us that the weight tables generally in use are misleading. They give only average weights, which are the composite of the good and the bad. These averages have been assumed to be the correct weights. As a matter of fact, they are not.

Up to the age of 30, it is well to weigh five or ten pounds more than the average weight for your age and height. But from 30 on, the best weight is from 10% to 20% less than the average. At age 50, men and women are at their best when they weigh considerably *below* the average for their height.

The reason is simple: The extra weight in earlier years is needed to give the body plenty of building material and to fortify it against tuberculosis and other infections to which young people are particularly subject. When we are older and food for growth is not needed, there is no longer any advantage in carrying the heavier burden of weight.

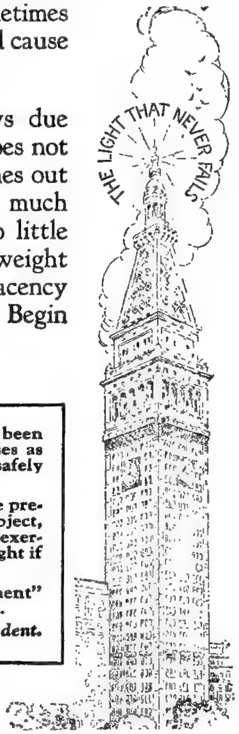
Stop and think of the six oldest people you know. The chances are they are not fat. Life insurance statistics have proved that as a rule the fat do not live to be really old men and women.

Fat is dangerous—a definite menace to life. And this is why: People who drag masses of flesh around are putting a strain upon their vital organs. High blood pressure, trouble with heart, kidneys or lungs often follow along in the train of excessive weight. The heart has to work extra hard pumping blood to tissues that the body *never was meant to have*. The digestive tract has a remorseless burden put upon it trying to dispose of needless food. An eminent specialist says that in at least 40% of the cases—fat is the predisposing cause of diabetes.

Remember, prevention is the better part of reducing. But if you *are* fat and don't want to have heart trouble or any of the diseases that fat induces—what are you to do about it?

Do not take any "fat reducers" except on the advice of your physician. They are usually viciously harmful and reduce nothing but your pocketbook. Have your doctor find out whether there is anything wrong with you physically. Sometimes glandular disturbances will cause fat.

Overweight is not always due to overeating. Exercise does not always reduce. But 90 times out of 100 the trouble is too much and too rich food and too little exercise. If you are overweight do not let laziness or complacency permit you to remain fat. Begin to reduce *right now*.


THE LIGHT THAT NEVER FAILS

People past their youth who weigh 20% more than the average have a one-third greater death rate than the average. Those who are 40% overweight have a 50% greater death rate than the average.

The Metropolitan Life Insurance Company recognizes overweight as so serious an impairment among its policyholders that it has issued a booklet which contains much valuable information for those who wish to reduce their weight.

This is the booklet that tells of the methods we have used in bringing a certain group of our own Metropolitan employees back to normal weight.

This simple regime of diet and exercise has been found to be most effective. In several cases as much as 50 pounds have been eliminated—safely and comfortably.

In this booklet will be found a weight table prepared according to the latest study on the subject, as well as a complete program of diet and exercises that will help you to reduce your weight if you are organically sound.

A copy of "Overweight—Cause and Treatment" will be mailed free to anyone who asks for it.

HALEY FISKE, *President.*

Published by

METROPOLITAN LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY—NEW YORK

Biggest in the World, More Assets, More Policyholders, More Insurance in force, More new Insurance each year

"*Our home is in Shanghai, China.* There, our eight-year-old Billy began having severe outbreaks of boils. The doctor's treatment there gave relief for a short time only. Then came a stay in America where we began a course of Fleischmann's Yeast, sandwiching the daily cake between layers of sugar cookies. Then did Fleischmann's prove itself, for the boils disappeared and after two years have never returned."

(Mrs. Julia W. Stafford of Shanghai, China)

"*Born with an appetite* for fats and sweets, at 40 I was constipated and headachey. I had long since adopted the pill habit as a temporary relief from the ills and discomforts that come with constipation. I was ordered to Hot Springs for baths and rigid diet when a casual hotel acquaintance advised that I take Fleischmann's Yeast. Today constipation and headaches are gone—vanished. I enjoy my food—my eyes are clear and my color good. I have greater zest for work—play—life itself."

(Mr. E. R. Henderson of Hot Springs, Ark.)

"*I had four children to provide for.* My work was laborious and one year's untiring efforts found me very much run-down. It was difficult for me to keep on my feet for more than an hour at a time. I was more than willing to do my utmost to provide for my loved ones, but my health interfered.

"I saw an advertisement about Fleischmann's Yeast. Eagerly, enthusiastically, I tried it. I religiously continued the treatment and soon began to feel strong. I am now in perfect health with the bloom of youth in my face. Fleischmann's Yeast has done all this for me."

(A letter from Mrs. H. Crookhorn of New York City)

Concentrated Energy in this fresh food

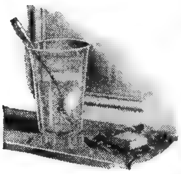
Billions of tiny living plants revitalize your system—banish Constipation, Skin, and Stomach Troubles

THESE remarkable reports are typical of thousands of similar tributes to Fleischmann's Yeast.

There is nothing mysterious about its action. It is not a "cure-all," not a medicine in any sense. But when the body is choked with the poisons of constipation—or when its vitality is low so that skin, stomach, and general health are affected—this simple, natural food achieves literally amazing results.

Concentrated in every cake of Fleischmann's Yeast are billions of tiny yeast-plants, alive and active. At once they go to work—invigorating the whole system, clearing the skin, aiding digestion, strengthening the intestinal muscles and making them healthy and active. *Health* is yours once more.

Dissolve one cake in a glass of water (just hot enough to drink)



—before breakfast and at bedtime. Fleischmann's Yeast, when taken this way, is especially effective in overcoming or preventing constipation.

Or eat 2 or 3 cakes a day—spread on bread or crackers—dissolved in fruit juices or milk—or eat it plain.

Fleischmann's Yeast for Health comes only in the tinfoil package—it cannot be purchased in tablet form. *All grocers have it.* Start eating it today! You can order several cakes at a time, for yeast will keep fresh in a cool, dry place for two or three days. Write us for further information or let us send you a free copy of our latest booklet on Yeast for Health. Address: Health Research Dept. Z-7, The Fleischmann Company, 701 Washington St., New York.

The Charm of a healthy skin—follow the Fairy way!

A normal, healthy, vigorous skin has a charm no cosmetic can hope to rival! And first of all, skin health means cleanliness.

Keep clean the Fairy way! See how simple and easy it is to retain that youthful, velvety skin by using a pure white soap!

Fairy Soap is the world's whitest soap. Of course it's perfectly pure. And it really clears the pores, leaving the skin fresh and invigorated.

Fairy Soap cleanses with delicacy. Makes a smooth, gently soothing lather that's balm to sensitive skins. The handy oval cake for toilet or bath. Lasts longer than ordinary soaps because it wears to a thin wafer.

It's white! It's pure! It floats!

FAIRY SOAP

Shawknit
TRADE MARK
REG. U.S. PAT. OFF.

FINE
HOSIERY

BEFORE you leave the city make sure that you have those cool, airy but strongly woven TS Numbers of Shawknit Silks. To spend a vacation in them is equalled only by the satisfaction over what you spent for them.

SHAW STOCKING CO.
Lowell, Mass.

$3 DOWN Brings you a Genuine UNDERWOOD TYPEWRITER

10 DAYS FREE TRIAL Your $3.00 unconditionally returned if at end of 10 days you are not satisfied with this late model UNDERWOOD typewriter rebuilt by the famous Shipman Ward process.

GREAT PRICE SAVING Direct to you from the largest typewriter factory in the world by our money saving methods.

EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS So small that you will not notice it while you enjoy the use of this wonderful machine.

FREE BOOK OF FACTS Explaining Shipman Ward's wonderful system of rebuilding typewriters and also valuable information about the typewriter industry both instructive and entertaining.

Act Today! Mail Coupon

5 Year Guarantee

Shipman Ward Mfg. Company
C263 Shipman Building
Montrose & Ravenswood
Aves., Chicago

Please send me a copy of your free book of facts, explaining bargain offer.

Name....................................
St. and No..............................
City...................... State...........

Have EYES
Like Stars

For EYES of starry brightness, use *Murine.* This harmless lotion clears the whites of the EYES and imparts new life and sparkle. Delightfully refreshing after reading, sewing, business, motoring and all outdoor sports.

Write Murine Company, Dept. 61, Chicago, for FREE Eye Care Book

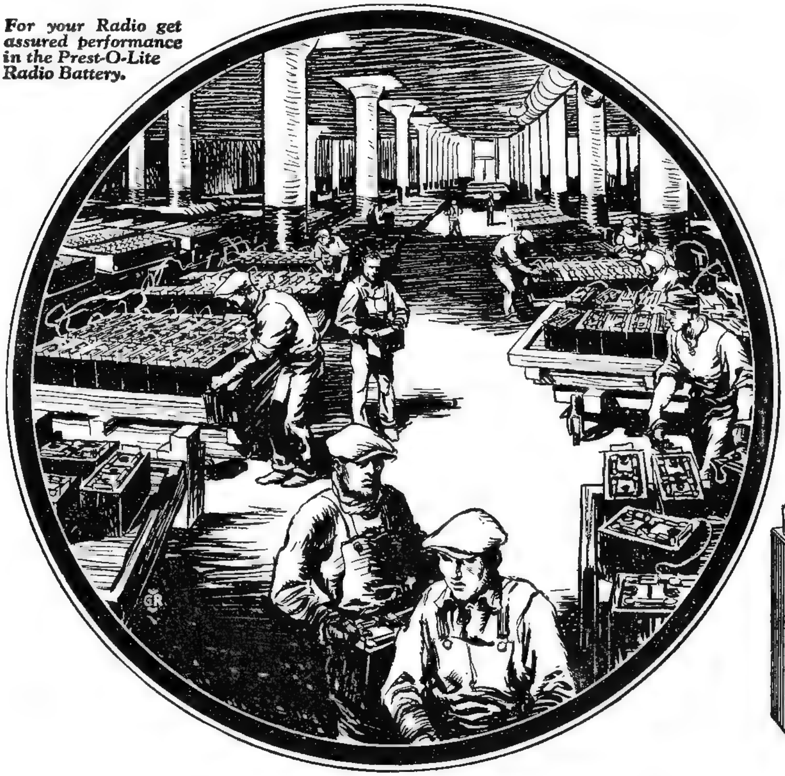
MURINE FOR YOUR EYES

Widely Used Since 1889

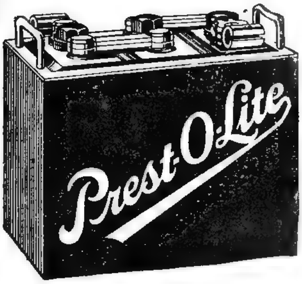
PATENTS WRITE for our Free Guide Books and "RECORD OF INVENTION BLANK" before disclosing inventions. Send model or sketch of your invention for our FREE Examination and Instructions. Terms Reasonable.
Victor J. Evans & Co., 752 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

Big Money Writing photoplays, stories, poems, songs. Send for free copy America's greatest magazine for writers. Tells you how to write and sell.
WRITER'S DIGEST, 607 Butler Building, Cincinnati, Ohio

For your Radio get assured performance in the Prest-O-Lite Radio Battery.



Charging Prest-O-Lite Batteries at the Speedway Plant



Why put an unknown battery in your car?

A Prest-O-Lite PRODUCT

WORLDS LARGEST MANUFACTURER OF ACETYLENE "THE GAS OF A THOUSAND USES"

BATTERIES FOR AUTOMOBILES, FARM LIGHTING, RAILWAY SIGNALS AND RADIO

The battery is the very heart of the entire electrical system. On its unfailing performance depends the satisfactory operation of your car. How foolish it would be to get a replacement battery without a name and reputation that assure performance! Assure yourself of dependability by getting a Prest-O-Lite Battery—"the battery with a name" that stands nationally for dependability of service and integrity of manufacture.

Back of The Prest-O-Lite Battery lie the great resources and reputation of the Prest-O-Lite organization — sound surety of unfailing dependability.

Prest-O-Lite costs no more.

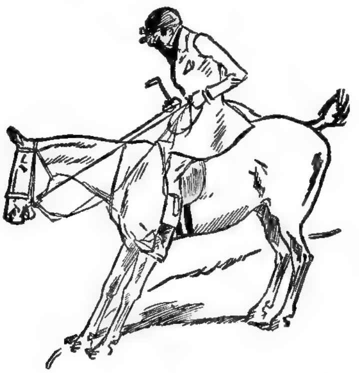
THE PREST-O-LITE COMPANY, Inc., Indianapolis, Ind.
New York: 30 East 42nd Street Pacific Coast: 599 Eighth Street, San Francisco
In Canada: Prest-O-Lite Company of Canada, Ltd., Toronto.

Prest-O-Lite

THE OLDEST SERVICE TO MOTORISTS

Prest-O-Lite BATTERY SERVICE

The Sign of "Friendly Service" Service Stations Everywhere



Don't jump at conclusions. Study your shoe needs carefully.

You want a shoe that looks right on your feet, a shoe that will wear like iron and hold its shape—a shoe that is reasonably priced.

Right?

You get just those qualities in the Crawford Shoe and then some.

You can't do better than trot around to the Crawford dealer's and try on some Crawford Shoes.

Step about and see how they fit—how comfortable they are.

And your size fits you in any style or last you choose!

The Crawford Shoe
FOR MEN

Most Styles $8
A few $9 and $10

CHARLES A. EATON
SHOE INDUSTRIES
BROCKTON, MASS.

© 1923

$90 Drafting Course FREE

If you accept an offer I am making now you need not pay for the course. I am doing this in order to enable deserving and ambitious men to get into this profession. I will also guarantee to train you until you are placed in a position drawing a salary of $250.00 a month. Besides I will give you a free complete set of drawing instruments worth $25.00. Write me for full information.

Chief Draftsman Dobe, 1951 Lawrence Av., Dept. 0-116, Chicago

FORD RUNS 57 MILES ON GALLON OF GASOLINE

A new automatic and self-regulating device has been invented by John A. Stransky, 2571 Fourth St., Pukwana, South Dakota, with which automobiles have made from 40 to 57 miles on a gallon of gasoline. It removes all carbon and prevents spark plug trouble and overheating. It can be installed by anyone in five minutes. Mr. Stransky wants agents and is willing to send a sample at his own risk. Write him today.—Adv.

Majestic Hotel
and
RESTAURANTS

PEERLESS cuisine and superb music—smart gowns and brilliant people—unique location and luxurious appointments—blend to make that indefinable "lure of the Majestic."

Experienced travellers know and appreciate its rare individuality—they always return.

Attractive Brochure "F" sent on request

Copeland Townsend

2 West 72nd Street
Entire block fronting Central Park
New York
Telephone Endicott 1900

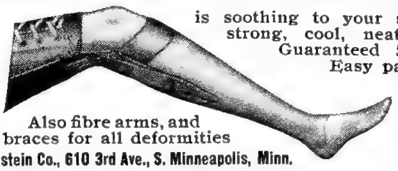
Extra Dollars for You!

HERE'S a real opportunity for you to earn $5, $10, $25 a week *extra*—and more if you want it! Simply act as a special *Everybody's* sales representative in your locality. Liberal commissions and bonuses. Easy spare-time work. All supplies furnished free. No obligation. Pin your name and address to this ad and mail *today.*

Box 1099, Butterick Bldg., New York, N.Y.

BUCHSTEIN'S FIBRE LIMB

is soothing to your stump,—strong, cool, neat, light. Guaranteed 5 years. Easy payments.



Also fibre arms, and braces for all deformities

Send for Catalog Today

E. Buchstein Co., 610 3rd Ave., S. Minneapolis, Minn.

FREE HELP For WRITERS

Stories, Poems, Plays, etc., are **wanted for publication.** Everyone who writes or **wants to write** needs our FREE Copyright Book, "The Key to the Editor's Desk." It points the way to **success and independence.** Write for this Free Book TODAY or submit manuscripts.

LITERARY BUREAU, - - 126, HANNIBAL, MO.

Results like these are truly "Priceless"

THE story of the extra-long, extra-keen Durham-Duplex Blades is told in *results.*

The man who uses them is well-groomed under all circumstances. A hurried shave and the shave under difficulties, as well as the shave for dress occasions all show the same unfailing result—a clean-shaven, immaculate appearance.

The proof? Any one of twelve million Durham-Duplex users—*at any time.*

DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR SETS
(both Models) ONE DOLLAR EACH
Interchangeable Blades— 50c for package of 5
DURHAM-DUPLEX RAZOR CO.
Jersey City, N. J.
FACTORIES: Jersey City; Sheffield; Paris; Toronto
Sales Representatives in all Countries

DURHAM DUPLEX RAZOR CO.
PAT. D U.S.A. MAY 28 1907

DURHAM-DUPLEX

The Razor of "Priceless" Comfort

A Trip to Yesterday

A voyage to Montreal, old Quebec, and on through the stupendous gorge of the Saguenay, is an experience unforgettable. From the deck of modern, luxurious steamships of the Canada Steamship Lines, this land of romance and adventure is yours to rediscover.

You can begin your journey at Niagara Falls, Toronto, Rochester, Alexandria Bay, Clayton, Montreal, or Quebec, and return the same way.

Send 2c postage for illustrated booklet, "Niagara to the Sea," including map and guide, to JOHN F. PIERCE, Pass. Traffic Manager, Canada Steamship Lines, Ltd., 221 C. S. L. Building, Montreal, Canada.

A Thousand Miles of Travel
A Thousand Thrills of Pleasure

CANADA STEAMSHIP LINES

FRECKLES

Now Is the Time to Get Rid of These Ugly Spots

There's no longer the slightest need of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine from any druggist and apply a little of it night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than an ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and gain a beautiful, clear complexion.

Be sure to ask for double-strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.

BUNIONS

PEDODYNE, the marvelous new Solvent, banishes Bunions. The pain stops almost instantly. The Hump vanishes as though by magic. THEN YOU WILL HAVE SHAPELY FEET.

SENT ON TRIAL

I want you to have relief from Bunions. I want you to know the pleasure of foot comfort. I will gladly arrange to send you a box of Solvent to try. Simply write and say, "I want to try PEDODYNE." Address—

KAY LABORATORIES, Dept. K-933
186 N. La Salle St. Chicago, Illinois

BIG MONEY **AND FAST SALES. Every Owner Buys** Gold Initials for his auto. You charge $1.50, make $1.35. Ten orders daily easy. Write for particulars and free samples.

AMERICAN MONOGRAM CO., Dept. 41, East Orange, N. J.

THE VALUE OF CHARCOAL

Few People Know How Useful it is in Preserving Health and Beauty.

Nearly everybody knows that charcoal is the safest and most efficient disinfectant and purifier in nature, but few realize its value when properly prepared and taken into the human system for the same cleansing purpose.

Charcoal is a remedy that the more you take of it the better; it is not a drug at all, but simply absorbs the gases and impurities always present in the stomach and intestines and carries them out of the system.

Charcoal sweetens the breath after smoking, and after eating onions and other odorous vegetables.

Charcoal effectually clears and improves the complexion, it whitens the teeth and further acts as a natural and eminently safe cathartic.

It absorbs the injurious gases which collect in the stomach and bowels; it disinfects the mouth and throat from the poison of catarrh.

All druggists sell charcoal in one form or another, but probably the best charcoal and the most for the money is in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges; they are composed of the finest quality Willow charcoal powdered to extreme fineness, then compressed in tablet form or rather in the form of large, pleasant tasting lozenges, the charcoal being sweetened to be smooth and palatable.

The daily use of these lozenges will soon tell in a much improved condition of the general health, better complexion, sweeter breath and purer blood, and the beauty of it is that no possible harm can result from their continued use, but on the contrary, great benefit.

Many physicians advise Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges to patients suffering from gas in stomach and bowels, and to clear the complexion and purify the breath, mouth and throat. They are also believed to greatly benefit the liver. These lozenges cost but thirty cents a box at drug stores. For a free trial send your name and address to F. A. Stuart Co., 1 Stuart Bldg., Marshall, Mich. You get more and better charcoal in Stuart's Absorbent Lozenges than in any of the ordinary charcoal tablets.

Make $75⁰⁰ a Week and up

Make $75.00 a week and up, selling our fine made-to-measure, all-wool suits, direct to wearer. Biggest values—positively sell on sight. Biggest commissions paid in advance. We attend to delivery and collections. 6x9 swatch samples—over 100 styles all one price—furnished FREE. Part or full time men write at once.

W. Z. Gibson, Inc., 161 W. Harrison St., Dept. H-32, Chicago

ARMOUR CORD

SELL TIRES

DIRECT FROM FACTORY

We want an auto owner in each locality to advertise Armour Cords. You can make big money and get your own sample Tires Free, by sending us orders from friends and neighbors. No capital or experience needed. We deliver and collect direct. Pay you daily.

Most Liberal Tire Guarantee Ever Written

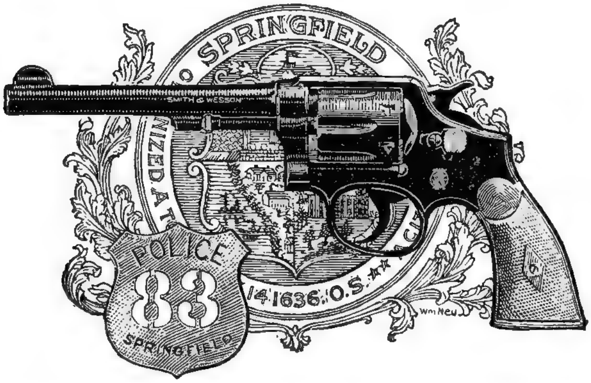
Armour Cords guaranteed by Indemnity Bond against Blow Out, Wear and Tear, Stone Bruise, Tread Separation, Blistering and Rim Cut for 12,500 miles. We are actual manufacturers. **Write today** for great Special Offer to Agents, and low Factory Prices.

ARMOUR TIRE & RUBBER CO., Dept. 951, Dayton, O.

You can be quickly cured, if you

STAMMER

Send 10 cents for 288-page book on Stammering and Stuttering, **"Its Cause and Cure."** It tells how I cured myself after stammering 20 yrs. **B. N. Bogue, 2377 Bogue Bldg., 1147 N. Ill. St., Indianapolis.**



ASK your dealer to let you handle a Smith & Wesson Superior Revolver. Not only its sturdy appearance, but its dependable construction and proved accuracy will impress you. You need only to feel it in your hand to be assured of its surpassing merit and of its worthiness to be called SUPERIOR.

SMITH & WESSON

Manufacturers of Superior Revolvers

SPRINGFIELD
MASSACHUSETTS

Catalogue sent on request. Address Department M

No arms are genuine Smith & Wesson Arms unless they bear, plainly marked on the barrel, the name

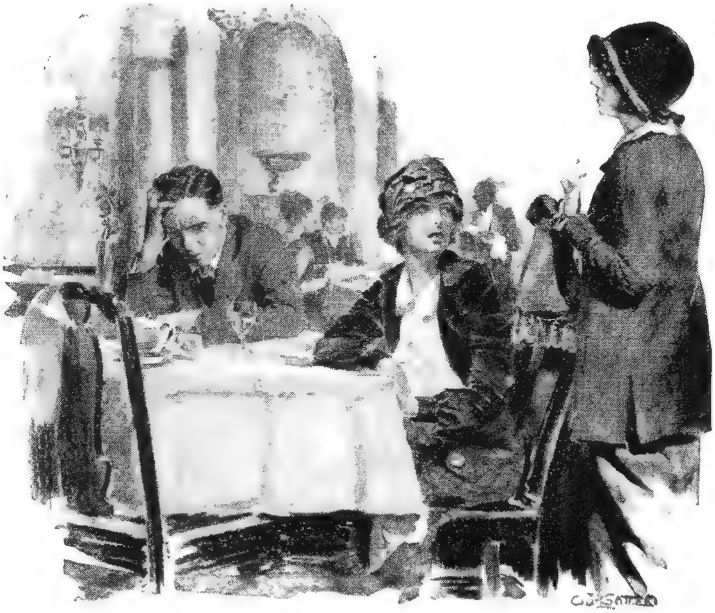
SMITH & WESSON, SPRINGFIELD, MASS.

Western Representative:
Andrew Carrigan Company, Rialto Bldg., San Francisco, Cal., Los Angeles, Cal., Seattle, Wash.

Engaged to two girls—he invites them both to dinner! . . .

. . . "Little celebration —lucky dog have two Queens of Sheba," said Martin.

And to himself, "Oh, hell!"



"Swell room!" chirped Leora.

Madeline had looked as though she intended to say the same thing in longer words.

He was ordering, with agony. While he wondered what "Purée St. Germain" could be, and the waiter hideously stood watching behind his shoulder, Madeline fell to. She chanted with horrifying politeness:

"Mr. Arrowsmith tells me you are a nurse, Miss—Tozer."

"Yes, sort of."

"Do you find it interesting?"

"Well—yes—yes, I think it's interesting."

"Do you come from Zenith, Miss—Tozer?"

"No, I come from—just a little town. Well, hardly a town—North Dakota."

"Do you find the contrast to North Dakota interesting?"

"Well, of course it's different."

"Tell me what North Dakota's like. I've always wondered about these Western States."

"I don't think I know just how you mean."

"I mean what is the general effect? The *impression?*"

"Well, it's got lots of wheat and lots of Swedes."

"But I mean—I suppose you're all terribly virile and energetic, compared with us Easterners?"

"I don't— Well, yes, maybe."

"Have you met lots of people in Zenith?"

"Not so *awfully* many."

He sat alone and helpless while she again turned on Leora and ever more brightly inquired whether Leora knew this son of a corporation lawyer and that famous débutante, this hat-shop and that country club.

"Well—" She dismissed Leora and looked patronizingly at Martin. "Are you planning some more work on the what-is-it with rabbits?"

He was grim. He could do it now, if he got it over quickly. "Madeline! Brought you two together because— Don't know whether you cotton to each other or not, but I wish you could, because I've—I'm not making any excuse for myself. I couldn't help it. I'm engaged to both of you, and I want to know——"

How will Leora and Madeline take this startling news? You will want to read this dramatic novel—

"DR. MARTIN ARROWSMITH," by

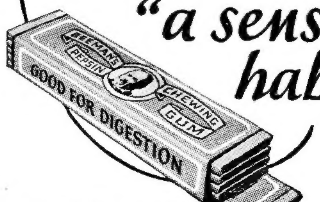
SINCLAIR LEWIS

Famous author of "MAIN STREET" and "BABBITT," in

THE DESIGNER

On sale at all newsstands—15c a copy

Let the children have all the Beeman's they want—it's healthful and tasty—its use is *"a sensible habit"*



BEEMAN'S
Pepsin Gum

AMERICAN CHICLE CO.

"I'm Going to Make More Money!"

"I'm tired working for a small salary. I know I have just as good a head on me as Fred Moore and Bob Roberts, for we used to work side by side. But they've gone far ahead of me.

"Why? Because they saw the value of special training, and I didn't.

"But I know better now. If the International Correspondence Schools can raise the salaries of men like Fred Moore and Bob Roberts, they can raise mine, too!

"If they have helped others to advance, they can help me. Today—right now—I'm going to send in this coupon and at least find out what the I. C. S. can do for me."

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS
Box 2611-B, Scranton, Penna.

Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject *before* which I have marked an X:

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Personnel Organization
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Business Law
☐ Banking and Banking Law
☐ Accountancy (including C.P.A.)
☐ Nicholson Cost Accounting
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Private Secretary
☐ Spanish ☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Better Letters
☐ Show Card Lettering
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Business English
☐ Civil Service
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Common School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ Illustrating ☐ Cartooning

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Electrical Engineering
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Mechanical Engineer
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machine Shop Practice
☐ Railroad Positions
☐ Gas Engine Operating
☐ Civil Engineer
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Metallurgy
☐ Steam Engineering
☐ Radio
☐ Architect
☐ Architects' Blue Prints
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Concrete Builder
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Automobile Work
☐ Airplane Engines
☐ Navigation
☐ Agriculture and Poultry
☐ Mathematics

Name..

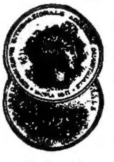
Street Address.. 3-6-24

City...State...

Occupation..

Persons residing in Canada should send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada.

Stop Using a Truss



Reduced Fac-Simile Gold Medal

Reduced Fac-Simile Grand Prix

STUART'S PLAPAO-PADS are different from the truss, being mechanico-chemico applicators made **self-adhesive** purposely to hold the distended muscles securely in place. **No straps, buckles or spring attached**—cannot slip, so **cannot** chafe or press against the pubic bone. Thousands have successfully treated themselves at home without hindrance from work—most obstinate cases conquered. **Soft as velvet—easy to apply—inexpensive.** Awarded Gold Medal and Grand Prix. Process of recovery is natural, so afterwards no further use for trusses. We prove it by sending Trial of Plapao absolutely **FREE**

Write name on Coupon and send TODAY.

Plapao Co., 633 Stuart Bldg., St. Louis, Mo.

Name ....

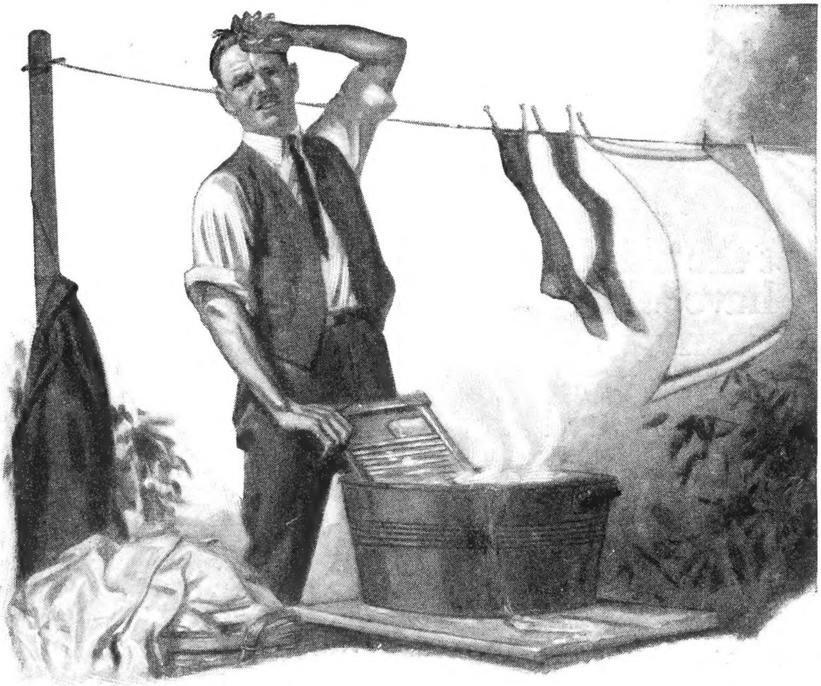
Address..

Return mail will bring Free Trial Plapao.

SEND US YOUR FILMS

Mail us 20c with any size film for development and six prints, or send us six negatives, any size, and 20c for six prints. Trial 5x7 enlargement in handsome folder, 25c. Overnight Service.

ROANOKE PHOTO FINISHING CO.
268 Bell Ave. Roanoke, Va.



If father did the washing just once!

If every father did the family washing next Monday there would be an electric washing machine in every home before next Saturday night.

For fathers are used to figuring costs. They'd say: "The electricity for a week's washing costs less than a cake of soap. Human time and strength are too precious for work which a machine can do so cheaply and well."

You will find this monogram of the General Electric Company on many devices that take the drudgery out of housework. Look at it closely and remember the letters G-E. They are a symbol of service—the initials of a friend.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

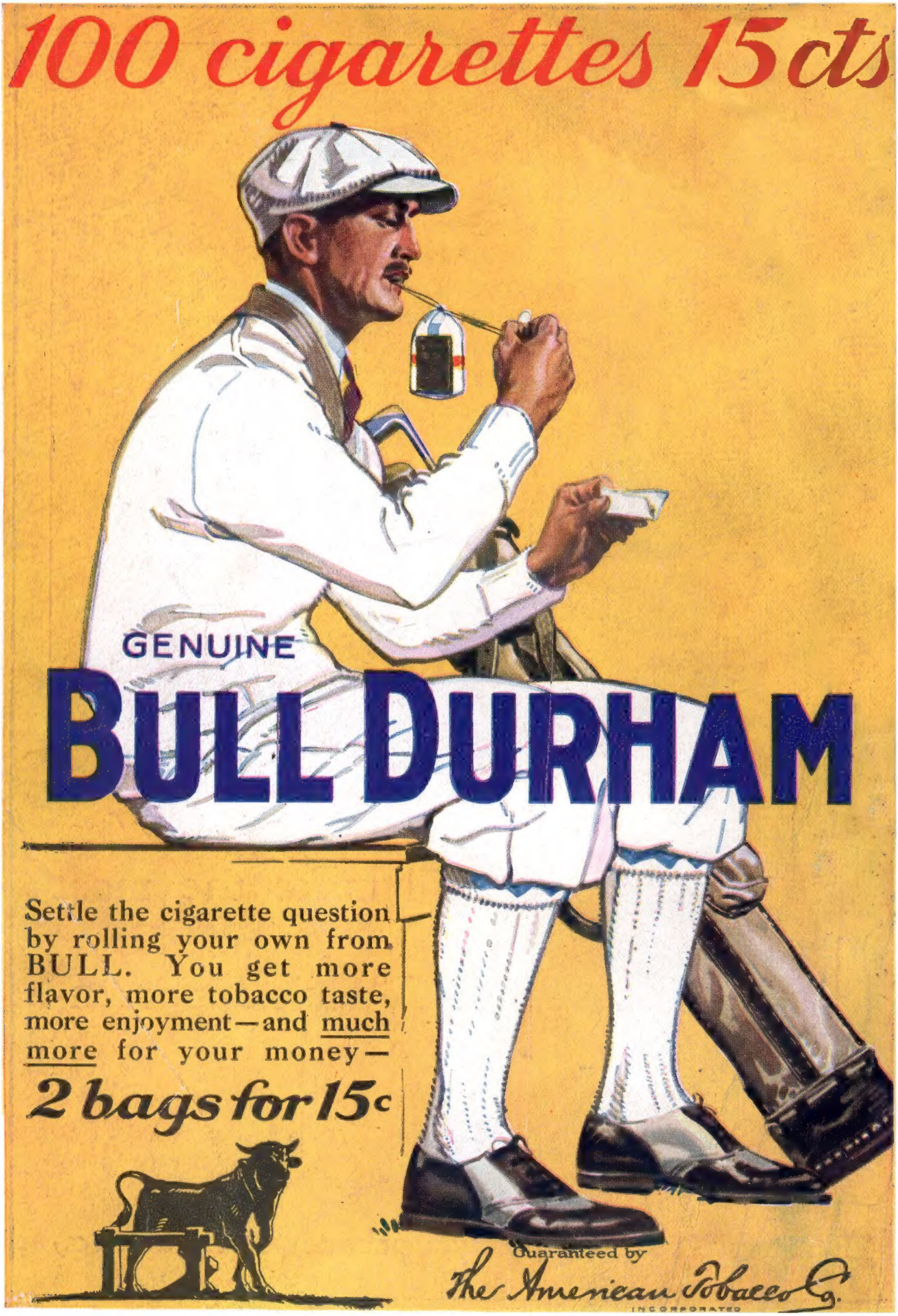
Let Kodak Keep the Story

What a chance for a picture! Yes, and your Kodak will make the most of it.

Vacation's fun is Kodak's opportunity.

Autographic Kodaks *$6.50 up*

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, N.Y., *The Kodak City*



100 cigarettes 15 cts

GENUINE

BULL DURHAM

Settle the cigarette question by rolling your own from BULL. You get more flavor, more tobacco taste, more enjoyment—and much more for your money—

2 bags for 15c

Guaranteed by

The American Tobacco Co.

INCORPORATED